HOFFNUNGSAU MENNONITE CHURCH

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CENTENNIAL
HISTORY OF

HOFFNUNGSAU MENNONITE CHURCH

Albert N. Hostetler

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DEDICATION

The Young People of the
Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church

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FOREWORD

This Centennial year has been a time of praise and thanksgiving to God for our one-hundred year pilgrimage in the heart of this nation. It has brought renewed interest in the rich biblical and historical tradition which our forefathers so faithfully upheld. Their response to God's call often led them along a path that necessitated much hardship, suffering and even the surrender of life itself. All of our efforts seem insignificant when we consider this rich heritage. The knowledge and remembrance of the past is essential for us today and for those not yet born as we move into the second century.

A most appropriate way to make the past a living reality is through the publication of this book. We consider ourselves most fortunate in being able to secure the Rev. Albert M. Gaeddert to compile and write this history of the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church. He is the grandson of Elder Dietrich Gaeddert who was the spiritual leader who led our forefathers from Russia to this promised land. He is a son of this congregation who answered God's call into the Christian ministry and served his home church for twenty-one years as a minister and elder. He has demonstrated his profound interest in our past history and our future as a people of God.

On behalf of the Hoffnungsau congregation, the Centennial Committee consisting of Albert Ediger, Chairman; Elmer Gaeddert, Willis Harder and Irvin Schmidt, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to Rev. Albert Gaeddert and the others who helped to make this a reality.

May the same Spirit of God that led our brothers and sisters in the past, direct us now and in the future so that we too will have been faithful disciples of God.

Rev. Frank R. Keller

CONTENTS

Chapter I
Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church 8

Chapter II
To Russia by Invitation of Catherine II 10

Chapter III
Dietrich Gaeddert 15

Chapter IV
"Kurze Chronick" From Hoffnungsau Church Record 24

Chapter V
Settling in Kansas 36

Chapter VI
The Beginning of the Hoffnungsau Congregation 51

Chapter VII
Abraham Ratzlaff Becomes Elder 63

Chapter VIII
During A. J. Dyck's Eldership 76

Chapter IX
The Last of the Elders Elected Out of the Congregation 86

Chapter X
Lamont Woelk Called to Become Pastor 104

Chapter XI
Hoffnungsau From 1967-1972 111

Chapter XII
The Frank Kellers Come to Hoffnungsau 121

Appendix 127

INTRODUCTION

A Committee from the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church approached the writer late in 1973 whether he would be willing to write a history of the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church? The Committee thought it appropriate to ask the writer, since Hoffnungsau was his home church, where the writer had served as pastor for thirteen years, and since the writer's grandfather, Elder Dietrich Gaeddert had founded the congregation.

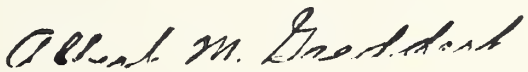
The writer is indebted to many persons who have been gracious in giving information generously. The records of the Church, especially Volume One of the Church Record begun by Grandfather, have been the writer's source for many things, including the "Kurze Chronick" which is translated in its entirety in one of the chapters. Likewise other records have been supplied, including printed Annual Meeting Reports that were available; several persons supplied outlines of significant events, changes that occurred during given periods of time; others supplied lists of Church and Sunday School officers gleaned from the records. A vote of special thanks to all of these, and to those who have provided pictures.

In a special way the writer is indebted to his wife Edna for the many suggestions, for reading the proofs with him, for assembling pictures, and giving encouragement and timely suggestions all through the months of gathering and compiling materials. The writer alone, however, is responsible for mistakes and omissions.

A word of appreciation to Mrs. Loris (Evelyn Regier) Habegger for her willingness to type the pages and ready them for the printer; and to her husband for his help. To Glen Ediger for his drawings—the cover page, and the reproduced replica of the inside of the church building patterned after the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in Russia. To Alvin

Beachy, Professor of Bible and Religion, Bethel College, and a close friend of the Frank Kellers, for his story of "How Butch Became Preacher."

The CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF HOFFNUNSAU MENNONITE CHURCH could have been written in other ways than dividing it in time-periods according to the elders and pastors who served. The style chosen was not meant to convey the impression that a congregation's history is made by its elders and pastors; indeed the writer believes that the Church is not a hierarchy but a fellowship of believers, where responsibilities are jointly shared, and where God works through His people. Hence the divisions into the seven eras are but a practical arrangement for convenience of recording some of the events of significance as and when they occurred. May the people at Hoffnungsau continue to be used of God in His Kingdom work!



Chapter I

HOFFNUNGSAU MENNONITE CHURCH

Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church is located five miles east and two and one half south of Inman, Kansas. Its address is Inman, Kansas. It is also five miles east and two and one-half north of Buhler. The present structure is the third building, but the location has been on the same plot of ground for all three buildings.

The name has a history. It is not an easy name to pronounce, especially for one who is not familiar with the German language. It got its name in this manner:

> On the day that a number of the group (of Mennonite emigres from Russia who were out looking over the land to determine where they would settle) had gone from Hutchinson, Kansas, their final destination, to look for a suitable location for settlement, they came to a high ridge north of present-day Buhler, Kansas, and could overlook the wide stretch of prairie to the east and north; they seemed well pleased with the place. Johann Dueck, who was later to become deacon in the congregation, made the remark in German: "Dies ist ja hier eine wahrhaftige Hoffnungs Au" (This is a very pleasant view; it is like looking onto a Meadow of Hope). Dietrich Gaeddert had heard this statement, and said this should be the name of the church that was to be organized, and thus it was so decided.[1]

The congregation has kept the name ever since. There have been times when serious consideration was given to adopting the English name, but it is difficult to put the full meaning into one word. The German "Au" means meadow. At the same time when used together with "Hoffnung" it takes on also

the meaning of a field of promise. Hopeview has been proposed, but this limits the richness of the expression greatly, and to this day the congregation continues the use of the original name Hoffnungsau.

This group of people who came here in 1874 came from South Russia, in the area of the Molotschna River near the Sea of Azov and the larger Black Sea. They were settled there in villages, more than sixty of them, and one of these was named Alexanderwohl. This village had some 680 residents. At the center of interest and almost in the center geographically was the Alexanderwohl Church. This village was founded in 1821 by Mennonites from Prussia some of whom had originally come from Holland. The record of the church was started during the 1600's in the village Przechowka, Poland. The village has also been called Wintersdorf. The name "Alexanderwohl" came from the time when Czar Alexander wished them well as he met them on their way from Prussia to Russia. This Alexanderwohl congregation migrated almost in its entirety during the great migration in 1874; perhaps all but two or three families left for America.

Although almost the entire congregation came to America, the people did not all settle at one location. Some of them founded the new Alexanderwohl Church north of Newton, Kansas, and another group went about 20 miles farther west, forming the Hoffnungsau Church. They came over in two different ships. The new Alexanderwohl group led by Elder Jacob Buller came over on the *Cimbria;* the group which went farther west and formed the Hoffnungsau congregation, led by Dietrich Gaeddert, came over in the *Teutonia.* Exactly how they determined who went in which ship is not known. One can perhaps assume that they went by families and relatives.

1. From *Mennonite Life,* Oct. 1949; Rev. A. J. Dyck, one of the elders of the church.

Chapter II

TO RUSSIA BY INVITATION OF CATHERINE II

Catherine II, ruler of Russia in the nineteenth century, had taken note of the ability of Mennonite farmers in Prussia, where they had turned low-lying swamplands into productive agricultural communities. Having recently expanded her Russian holdings in the southern regions, she knew that if the farmers from Prussia could be induced to come to develop the steppes of Russia, this would be a great help. She extended the invitation and was very generous with the privileges granted. She promised the Mennonites that they would be free to practice their religious faith; however, they were not to prosyletize among the people living in Russia. They would be free to use the German language in the churches and in the schools. They would be free to develop the school system as they wished. What pleased the Mennonites most was the promise of exemption from military service, for this was one of the tenets of their faith—they could not take part in war and in military training or service.

These privileges attracted large numbers of Mennonites to Russia. They welcomed the promise to govern themselves with a minimum of interference from higher officials either in the affairs of community or from the central government.

Among the Mennonites who settled in South Russia, in the Ukraine along the Molotschna River, was a large group coming from Danzig. There was first the Old Colony Mennonite group, about 228 families, who in 1789 settled at the mouth of the Chortitza River on the banks of the Dnieper. Their colony was called the Chortitza Colony. The second group who also came from Prussia located 100 miles to the

southeast along the Molotschna River, and there founded the Molotschna Colony in 1803. These were experienced farmers who brought implements, furniture, money and other possessions with them. Quoting a Mr. Klaus, Dr. Cornelius Krahn says:

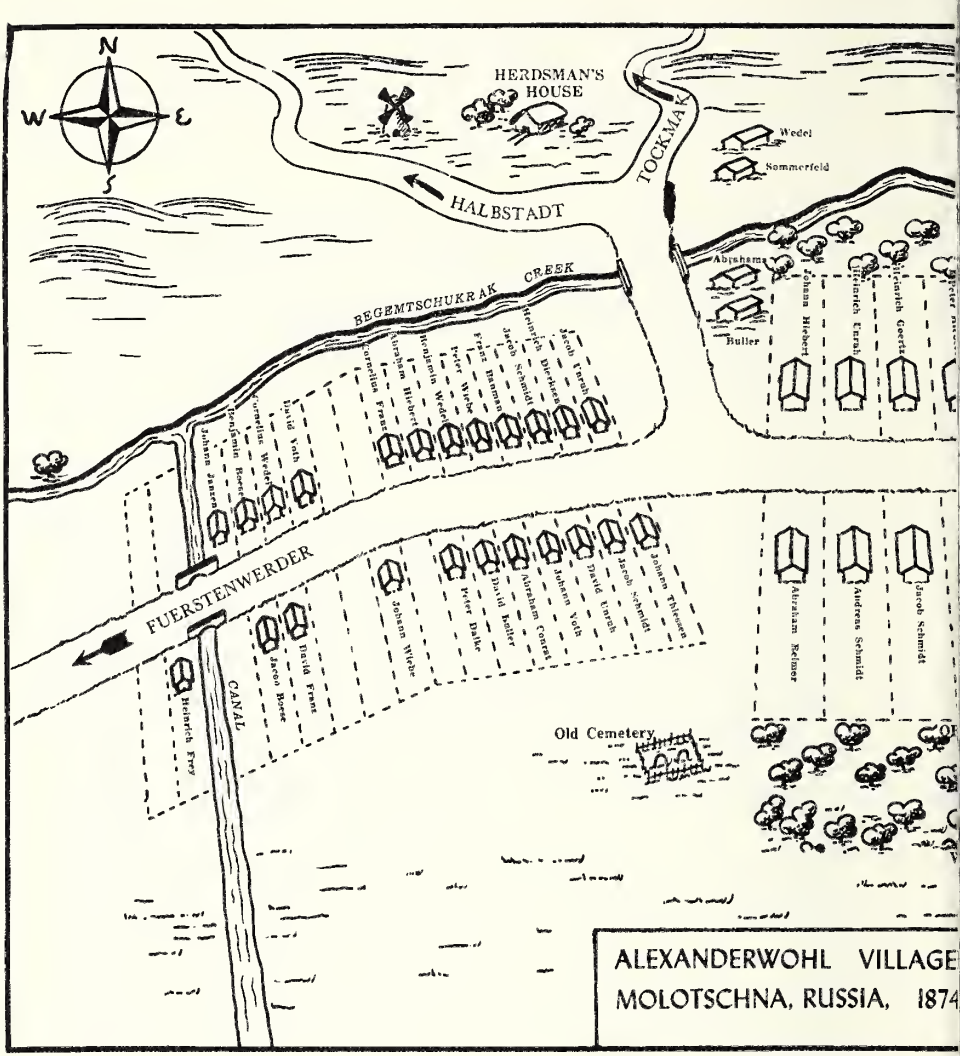
> Soon the Mennonites achieved among us a hitherto unknown prosperity and an excellent organization. On the steppes, where in previous times there had been no water or even one shrub, now rose as if by magic, one prosperous settlement next to the other. There is plenty of well water, there are groves of orchards, mulberry and shade trees. In the well-kept pastures are herds of sheep, cattle, and horses of all kinds and excellent breeds.[1]

Cornelius Krahn continues:

> What accounts for the beginning of this success? Mennonites had always been, in a way, "other worldly." Because of their separation from the world, based on religious beliefs they became predominantly a rural people. Bible and plow became inseparable for them. Religious tradition and heritage made them good farmers. Thus agriculture became a "religious duty." Had not God sent Adam forth "to till the ground"? This religious duty found an opportunity in the steppes of the Ukraine as nowhere else.[2]

The development of the book quoted above shows how for the Mennonites that went to Russia this was not necessarily a natural thing; they were not born with it. But they were a people for whom the Bible had become the Word of God, on which they depended for day to day guidance, for inspiration and for fortification against all the ills and evils of this world, and for whom farming became a way of life.

The farm seemed to many of them the place where they could make the contribution to life that they wished to make. Wanting to be left alone to manage their own communities, their schools and their churches, they found in Russia a suitable place to live. They built their homes in villages, so that they lived close to one another, even though their land which they farmed was not all right adjacent to their dwelling place. They took pride in developing their land; good farming practices were urged upon them from persons who lived right among them, like Johann Cornies, who became a very successful farmer who developed new and better methods on his own,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HERDSMAN'S HOUSE
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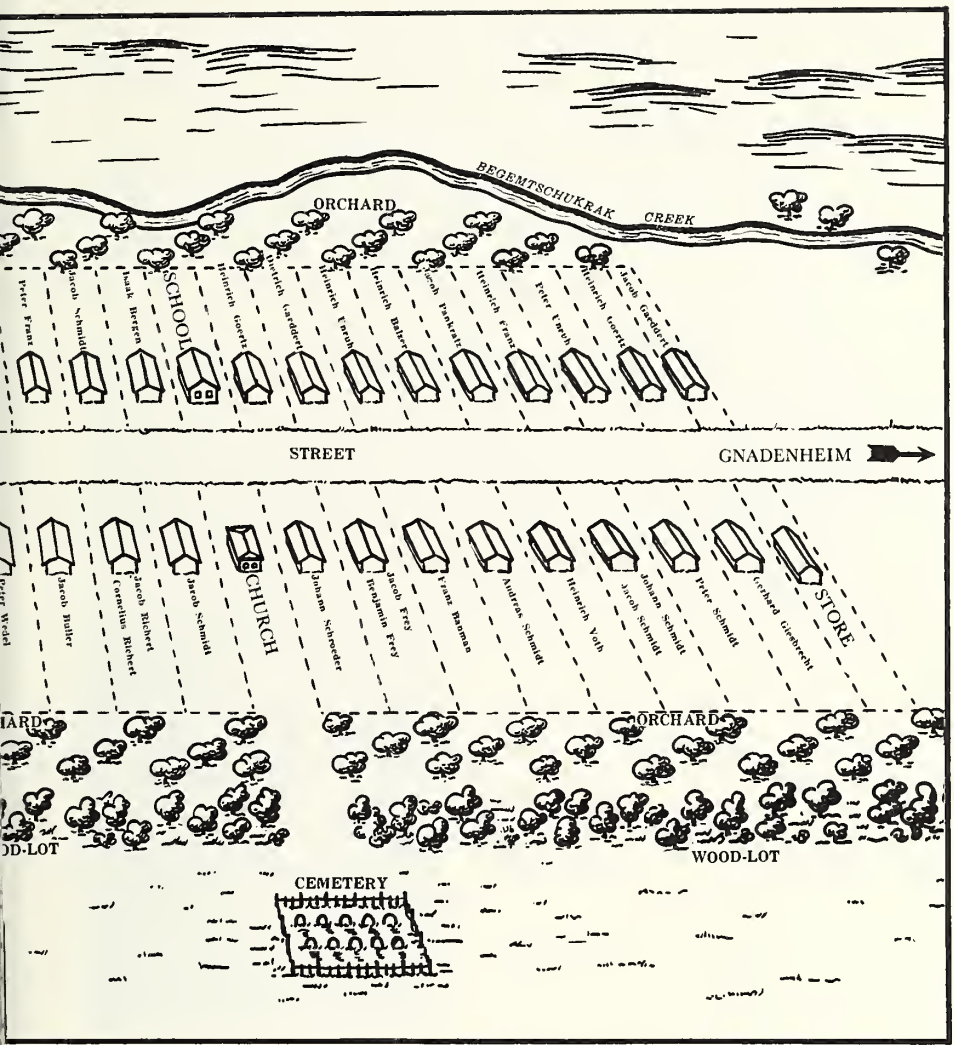
TOCKMA
Wedel
Sommerfeld
BEGEMTSCHUKRAK CREEK
Abrahams
Buller
Johann Hiebert
Heinrich Ewert
Heinrich Geertz
Jacob Ewert
Jacob Schmidt
Heinrich Dirkson
Heinrich Dirkson
Peter Wiebe
Johann Hiebert
Benjamin Wedel
Cornelius Wiebe
Cornelius Wiebe
Benjamin Boese
Johann Janzen
David Voth
FUERSTENWERDER
Johann Wiebe
Peter Dalke
David Heller
Abraham Conrad
Johann Voth
David Unruh
Jacob Schmidt
Johann Thiessen
Abraham Reimer
Andreas Schmidt
Jacob Schmidt
Heinrich Frey
CANAL
Jacob Boese
David Franz
Old Cemetery
ALEXANDERWOHL VILLAGE
MOLOTSCHNA, RUSSIA, 1874


BEGEMTSCHUKRAK CREEK
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SCHOOL
CHURCH
STORE
STREET
GNADENHEIM
ORCHARD
ORCHARD
WOOD-LOT
WOOD-LOT
CEMETERY
Peter Franz
Jacob Schmidt
Isaak Bergen
Heinrich Goertz
Heinrich Carsdorf
Heinrich Enrob
Heinrich Baker
Jacob Frankratt
Heinrich Franz
Peter Enrob
Heinrich Goertz
Jacob Gardsdorf
Peter Wedel
Jacob Baller
Cornelius Richert
Jacob Richert
Jacob Schmidt
Johann Schroeder
Benjamin Frey
Jacob Frey
Franz Bauman
Andreas Schmidt
Heinrich Voth
Jacob Schmidt
Johann Schmidt
Peter Schmidt
Gerhard Giesbrecht

and was one who could induce others to profit by the experiments which he had found profitable.

Along with farming, they also developed whatever machinery and furnishings they needed. Often this developed in their little workshops, for there was considerable ingenuity among them. Thus Peter Lepp of Chortitza built the first threshing machine in 1853 and in 1860 he opened his own foundry.

> Before the first World War the eight largest manufacturing plants had a combined return of more than three million ruble.[3]

And so these farmers in Russia became the "granary of Russia," living in villages, following the Bible and the plow, developing their farms, schools, churches and their village life.

We look especially into one of these villages, the Alexanderwohl village, for out of it came Dietrich Gaeddert, who became the founder of the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church in Kansas.

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1. Krahn, Cornelius, Ed., *From the Steppes to the Prairies* (Newton, Kansas: Mennonite Publication Office, 1949) p. 2.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Chapter III

DIETRICH GAEDDERT

One of the villages (and there were in time more than 60) that developed in the Ukraine was the Alexanderwohl village. As stated above, it got its name from Czar Alexander who met them coming in from Prussia and on their way to the Molotschna area wished them "wohl" (well). So they named their new settlement after Czar Alexander, adding his "wohl" (well-wishing).

Dietrich Gaeddert
First Elder of the Hoffnungsau congregation
1875-1900

Dietrich Gaeddert came from the Alexanderwohl village and congregation. He later became the founder of the Hoffnungsau Church. It is in order, therefore, to include here a short biographical sketch of his life.*

*Credit is given to Dr. Ed. G. Kaufman who in his GENERAL CONFERENCE MENNONITE PIONEERS includes a biographical sketch of Dietrich Gaeddert. Dr. Kaufman was glad to give permission to use information from his book, saying that Gustave R. Gaeddert, a grandson of Dietrich Gaeddert, had compiled a biographical sketch of Dietrich Gaeddert in the early 1960s. Unfortunately Gaeddert's compilation is no longer available.

When the Alexanderwohl village was only 16 years old, Dietrich Gaeddert was born here March 2, 1837. He was the son of Jacob Gaeddert, who had married the widow Elizabeth Ratzlaff Buller. It was the second marriage for both of them. From this marriage there were two children—Dietrich and Helena. Helena married Benjamin Frey in 1859 and died childless in 1864, leaving Dietrich the only surviving child of his father's second marriage.

Young Dietrich went to school in Alexanderwohl under Heinrich Buller, teacher. Just how much schooling he had is not known. He became a teacher himself, teaching for eleven years in Paulsheim, Rueckenau, and Fuerstenwerder, Russia. On June 4, 1856 Dietrich was baptized by Elder Peter Buller of the Alexanderwohl Church. Three years later he married Maria Martens born in Rueckenau, South Russia, now a member of the Ohrloffer Church. They had thirteen children,

Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in Russia

of whom seven lived to move to America. In 1867, the year in which his mother died, Dietrich was elected a minister in the Alexanderwohl Church and was ordained in February

of the following year. In Russia Dietrich was referred to as "Lehrer" (teacher) Gaeddert.

(This designation as "Lehrer" Gaeddert used in the Hoffnungsau Church Record, Vol. 1 when he refers to the election of ministers. He refers to it as "Lehrer oder Predigerwahl" (election of teacher or preacher). It is said by those who are acquainted with these designations in Russia and in Prussia before that, and even earlier in Holland, that "Lehrer" was commonly used for "preacher," and that this goes back to New Testament designations of our Lord as "teacher," which He is called frequently.)

When the time came that military conscription was being talked about in Russia, this issue caused considerable unrest among the people. Military West Prussia had been incorporated into the Prussian Kangdom, and this brought with it many anxieties among the Mennonites. This led the Mennonites to begin making appeals to the Prussian government that their old privileges might be continued. But there was never an unconditional grant given. Each year they had to pay a tax for the support of the military school (Kadettenhaus), at Culm, West Prussia, which was for them in the words of Cornelius Janzen "a continual offence to our feelings."[1]

Prussian militarization caused many people to leave and to go to Russia. From the period about 1852 to 1870 large numbers of people moved from Prussia to Russia, including many Mennonites. Little did they realize that what was happening in Prussia and the larger part of Europe was also beginning to occur in Russia, although little was heard about it in Russia until 1870's.

According to a note in the book, *Exiled by the Czar,* Dietrich Gaeddert was one of the first to learn about the danger of Mennonite privileges being taken from them in Russia. He says he learned about this as early as 1861. However, in his diary, much of which was translated by one of Dietrich Gaeddert's grandsons, G. R. Gaeddert, he says that "nothing can be found referring to this citation." There is another reference told by Peter Bartel, a Mennonite elder in West Prussia, and once a delegate to Berlin, which says that in February, 1868, the crown prince in an audience given to the Mennonite elders, commented on their plans of going to South

Russia, if nonresistance would be denied them, saying that they should be assured of the possibility of returning, for what had happened in Prussia would soon also happen in Russia.[2]

So following the introduction of the conscription law in Russia in 1871, there was much activity among the Mennonites in Russia. At first there were very definite attempts to petition the government for the continuation of exemption from military service. Many meetings were called at various places, meetings to consider what to do. Many of these were held in the Alexanderwohl Church. There were likewise frequent visits and meetings among persons who were especially concerned about finding a place to move to if no changes could be arranged with government officials. Dietrich Gaeddert is often among those going to meetings to make plans. He meets Cornelius Janzen, who is an early advocate of going to America, who lives in Berdjansk; he meets with Leonhard Sudermann from the Pordenau Church and elder of the same. Gaeddert was elected from the Alexanderwohl congregation, together with Leonhard Sudermann from the Pordenau Church, to represent the Molotschna settlement, to a delegation of twelve to be sent to America to survey settlement opportunities. In a later chapter the others are listed. Suffice it to say here that a change had to be made when Dietrich Gaeddert could not go because of family conditions. So the Alexanderwohl Church elected Elder Jacob Buller to replace him. Elder Buller came back from America in September, 1873, with glowing reports. This was a strong confirmation to those who were eagerly waiting for word from America on what the prospects for going there looked like. Those who wanted to emigrate now sold their farms and their property.

When a whole village wants to sell at the same time it becomes difficult to find buyers. So it was in Alexanderwohl. Gaeddert reports in his "Kurze Chronick" (Short Chronicles) that farms were sold for less than half their value, and other household possessions for considerably less than that. Livestock and grain they could sell for a fair price.

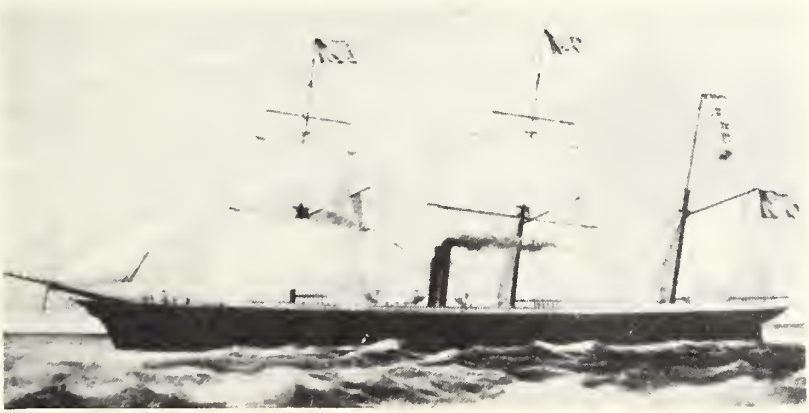
Passports had to be obtained, too; and this was a long process also. There were many attempts at the government level to persuade the Mennonites to stay; they tried to put them off, and to placate them by promises that something

could be worked out. A government representative by the name of Todtleben was sent to the colony to try to persuade them, but the Mennonites were decided to emigrate to America. The Alexanderwohl congregation formed a corporation and elected two men, Dietrich Gaeddert and Peter Balzer, to provide passports for the entire congregation. They set about this task in November of 1873 and received the passports July 15, 1874. But once they had them, Gaeddert reports in his "Chronick," it did not take them long to be ready. Within two days all the passports were given out, the money was collected for passage, and all was in order so that on the 18th of July they were ready to leave.

In a large congregation it would be unusual if there were not some poor people within the group who would not be able to go unless help was received from others. The congregation at Alexanderwohl did just this: they provided a fund so that all who wanted could emigrate. Gaeddert writes that many a person put in 3—500 rubles without interest to the poor, so that nobody had to stay behind for lack of funds.

Transportation contracts were with the Hamburg-American

The "Teutonia" immigrant ship on which most of the Hoffnungsau group came in 1874



Line. Costs ranged from $27 between deck to $46.43 for second class cabins. Elder Jacob Buller left with his group on the *Cimbria* on August 12, and Gaeddert with his 130 families on the *Teutonia* August 16, 1874.

The voyage on the overcrowded *Teutonia* lasted almost 18 days. Gaeddert reports that there were many experiences that were long remembered. (Gaeddert in his "Chronick" does not mention the fire that broke out on the *Teutonia*. This is mentioned by other writers, but the fire was fortunately brought under control, and apparently no lives were lost nor injuries sustained.) The *Teutonia* landed in New York where they were put up in the Castle Gardens, from where they left for the west. The Buller group apparently left New York ahead of the Gaeddert group and were probably gone from New York when the Gaeddert group arrived. Part of the Buller group went to Lincoln, Nebraska, and from there to the Henderson area, where some 36 families stayed while the rest of the Buller group returned to Kansas, finding settlement north of Newton, and forming the new Alexanderwohl Church. The Gaeddert group seems to have been united about going to Kansas. They arrived in Topeka on September 10, where they were housed in the King Bridge Shops, made available to them by the Santa Fe Railroad. These shops the Mennonites converted into one huge family hotel where they lived for almost a month. While the group stayed in Topeka a group of leaders traveled westward, and after some days of looking over prospective places to settle, they chose a tract of ground comprising about 35 sections, bordered roughly by the Little Arkansas River on the south and the Turkey Creek on the east, north of the Santa Fe lines.

The portion of the Buller group that had not stayed in Nebraska came back to Topeka, Kansas, and chose their area of settlement some 20 miles east of the Gaeddert group. The two groups which had been one Alexanderwohl congregation in Russia seems by this time to have definitely become two separate groups, settling about 20 to 30 miles apart in Central Kansas.

The Gaeddert group purchased most of their building materials, machines, seeds and flour, and stoves from Atchison, while the Buller group bought their lumber and building materials from Halstead where a lumber company had already been set up.

By this time another Mennonite group, led by Jacob Stucky, coming from Volhynia, Russia, had also come to Kansas and had selected their place of settlement just east of the Turkey Creek, close in to where the Gaeddert group was settling. Thus, there were large tracts of land purchased by these Mennonite groups, so that by October of 1874 the *Topeka Commonwealth* carried this announcement:

> One of the largest bona fide land sales ever made in Kansas, perhaps in America, has just been concluded by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company with a community of Russian Mennonites who landed in New York during the month of September with the steamers *Cimbria, Teutonia,* and *City of Richmond,* and most of whom have spent the last thirty days and a good many of their rubles in our city. Their land purchase amounts in round numbers to about one hundred thousand acres of railroad land, aside from a number of improved farms, all lying north of the sections of Florence, Peabody, Walton, Newton, Halstead, Burrton, and Hutchinson. . . . From the Cottonwood River to the Little Arkansas . . . is now one colony, composed of the thriftiest and most intelligent class of foreigners that ever landed upon our shores; and 'in three years'—to use the language of one of their elders—'that ocean of grass will be transformed into an ocean of waving fields of grain, just as we left our Molotschna colony.' Kansas will be to America what the country of the Black Sea of Azov is now to Europe—her wheat field.[3]

An earlier article had appeared also in the *Topeka Commonwealth* quoted from the *New York Herald,* about the impressions these newcomers made; large crowds gathered around the shops where these emigres were housed. It looked like this to the newswriter:

> They were all Germans, but having lived all their lives in Russia, their German has a curious Russian flavor, which did not at all improve their harsh Teutonic sounds. They were dressed in their primitive style. Our crack tailors would have been puzzled at the droll appearance of these ancient dresses. The women and children—the young ones were all consuming huge pieces of bread and butter with a rapidity which argued well for their digestion—had funny old handkerchiefs tied around their heads, and certainly no Broadway milliner ever supplied one of those quaint bonnets which the fair Mennonite beauties wore.[4]

While all this was taking place, the Santa Fe Railroad

Company had been most accommodating. To give tempory shelter to these immigrants, the Santa Fe Company was building four large immigrant houses at convenient places for receiving the newcomers in Harvey, McPherson, Marion, and Reno counties. Into these immigration houses the people moved, and here they lived while many of the Mennonites were beginning to build their own houses on their own land.

In the Alexanderwohl area many of the early houses were built in patterns somewhat like the Russian villages had been —in rows along the section lines, with their fields running into the section. This seems not to have been the pattern of the Gaeddert group. Why the village pattern did not take hold in the Gaeddert settlement is not clear. It may be that part of the answer lies in not being able to buy entire tracts of land not yet occupied, for there were some settlers already occupying tracts of land. The Gaeddert group did, however, approximate in part a village pattern in the Franzthal area, where settlers built across the road from each other along what early came to be known as "Deutsche Strasse" (German street, or later Dutch Avenue) running east and west from what is now Buhler and west to Medora, east to Hesston. There was in other areas another pattern of building in the middle of the section where the parents settled, and the sons and/or sons-in-law would build along the inside of the section lines around the section, having the parental home in the center.

It was noted in later years by the *Kansas City Journal* that the Mennonites came at a time "when nobody wanted to come to Kansas except grasshoppers, and when the whole state was for sale."[5] But these pioneers were hardy, and their spirits could not easily be daunted. They had come to gain religious freedom, and they had high anticipations of finding it here, and were ready to make the most of it; if it meant they had to sacrifice, they were ready to endure this, too.

It is of interest to note how much fell to those in positions of leadership. In many cases the leaders were ministers and elders. Not only were they the leaders in affairs of the church and in religious life, but in getting passports, arranging transportation, selecting the place to settle, arranging land purchases, making and arranging loans, and seeing to it that borrowed money be paid back. For the leaders there were no compartments of life—religious

and secular, spiritual and earning a livelihood—life was one whole for them, and they seemed to be looked to for direction and leadership by the group in every area of life. Of course, leaders, too, were responsible when things went wrong. While most of the people got their own baggage, two of the Gaeddert group failed to get their trunks and one had a wagon missing. The trunks for some unknown reason had been sent to Dakota; however, in due time they found their way back to Kansas. It gave Gaeddert some added correspondence.

Sickness also developed among the immigrants, and before long Gaeddert was selling "Alpen Kraueter" and there are invoices for other kinds of patent medicines. Some have very effective and promising labels for curing most everything that ails one. Apparently this helped to keep his people strong and healthy!

Gaeddert's group we must remember had been part of the Alexanderwohl Church in Russia. He had been elected as minister in Russia and ordained as such in 1867, the year in which his mother died. He served as minister there and was very active in church affairs, especially concerned when it became more and more evident that Mennonites were losing their religious freedom and their exemption from military service. Along with Gaeddert in the Gaeddert group were two other ministers from the Alexanderwohl Church in Russia, Peter Balzer and Peter Ratzlaff. As we will notice in a later chapter there were worship services on board ship, when they arrived in New York, and while in their immigration houses here.

The church was central in Gaeddert's concerns. Soon after they were here in Kansas, they began working with the organization of a church. They drew up a constitution, elected a leader, and on February 22, 1875, established a church. Gaeddert writes that the first thing they did was to decide to stand firm in their belief in Christian nonresistance.[6]

A year later, on April 19, they elected Gaeddert as elder but more about this in a later chapter.

1. Reimer, Gustav E. and Gaeddert, G. R., *Exiled by the Czar* (Newton, Kansas: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956) p. 39.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 173, footnote 20.
3. Kaufman, Edmund G., Compiler, *General Conference Mennonite Pioneers* (North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College) p. 80, footnote 15.
4. Kaufman, *Ibid.*, p. 79, footnote 12.
5. Kaufman, *Ibid.*, p. 81, *Kansas City Journal*, Jan. 29, 1915.
6. Kaufman, *Ibid.*, quotes *Mennonite Life,* 1949, pp 18ff.

Chapter IV

"KURZE CHRONICK" FROM HOFFNUNGSAU CHURCH RECORD

(A Translation)

This chapter is a translation of the *Kurze Chronick* (Short History) that Dietrich Gaeddert wrote in longhand in the early pages of the Church Record Book, Volume I. This is, therefore, the account of how he began the entries that made up the Church Records of Hoffnungsau, and for that reason this translation is given here.

"VORREDE" (PREFACE)

Russia's reform movement made it necessary for those who believed in nonresistance to emigrate, because all privileges and promises of exemption were rescinded. Thus we emigrated and came to America, establishing ourselves here in Kansas.

And, in order that those who follow after us may understand more clearly how the Hoffnungsau Congregation (*Gemeinde*) began, it was thought proper and wise that something be said in this Church Record Book about the early history of the Hoffnungsau Congregation. So in this Record Book we record first of all the list of families who became the charter members of our congregation; and secondly, those who became members later. Their names are added, and others will be added as they become members, thus gathering into one record all those who belong to this fellowship.

It should be possible in the future, should through the grace and goodness of God the world continue for some time, and

thus the fellowship of this congregation also continue, that ancestry could through these pages be traced, both on the paternal and the maternal side. In the column to the left of the name will be entered the parental page-designation of both father and mother.

It appeared when the settlements in Reno, Harvey, and McPherson counties first began that they who settled here were all of one mind, were closely knit, and all belonged to one group. Yet those who were more closely informed and knew more directly the thinking of the people were able to read between the lines and knew that this was not the case. As early as 1875, the very year that the Hoffnungsau Congregation was organized, a group of families followed the leadership of Jacob Klassen and organized what came to be the Bethel Mennonite Church under Klassen's leadership.

The next year, 1876, a sizable group of new immigrants came to these counties in Kansas, and this resulted in a considerable addition to our congregation.

In reality, the division that resulted here had already begun in Russia. It was evident in Russia already that there were several points of view, that we followed slightly differing practices, and that we operated under various concepts. So how could it be expected that the mere fact of being transplanted into a new land would bridge all the differences? One group was more intent on following a stricter discipline; the other's practices tended to be more permissive. We wanted definitely to be led by what the Scriptures would dictate. That was our goal.

The several congregations in Russia from which we came, and which already in Russia had their own elected elders and their own meeting places, were as follows: (Names of congregations were often the names of the villages in which the congregations were located) the Pordenauer, the Rudnerweider, the Gnadenfelder, the Margenauer, and the Alexanderwohler; (it was in the Alexanderwohler Congregation where Dietrich Gaeddert was a minister); the Ohrloffer, and the Lichtenauer Congregations. One separate group had already been formed, namely the Kleinegemeinde; this was the group who performed their baptism in water, which was different from our practice.

Out of these congregations we came, all of us who settled

here in these Kansas counties. Having come from several congregations, we found it necessary to draw up congregational regulations which would serve as guidelines for us. These were drawn up; and a short history of how our congregation came into being was written. Following this, we called a meeting of our brethren (Bruderschaft), where it became clear that we were not all of one accord, and it resulted in the two groups being set up: Hoffnungsau Congregation and the Bethel Congregation.

(Here follows an explanation of how the Record Book is set up, the different columns, and what is to be entered in each, making the record usable. This has not been translated here.)

A Short History of the Mennonites who came from Russia to America, Settling in Harvey, McPherson, and Reno County, Kansas in the Summer of 1874

There occurred a tremendous upheaval among the Mennonites in Russia when suddenly it became clear what was happening in Russia. In a word, it was the militarization which was sweeping Europe, that was also coming into Russia. This struck directly at the center of our faith, since we were believers in nonresistance, unable to take part in military training or service.

From the earliest word of what was taking place, it had a very sobering effect on all with whom nonresistance was an essential part of their faith. It led us all to new depths of prayer, and to a deeper testing of our faith, because we could almost anticipate what this would mean. So from the beginning there were many conferences in which we were called together, and where the ministers would speak very clearly from the beginning on this point: "We do not want to let go of the faith of our fathers!" Instead, we want to stand firm in our faith. It was clear from the beginning that we could not comply with the civil and military demands of the Russian government.

There followed then frequent deputations sent by the several conferences that were called at various times; deputations to the Russian government, asking them to reconsider the privileges earlier granted the Mennonites for exemption from

military training and service. These deputations were undergirded with prayers to the Throne of God, both in the homes and in churches, with deep earnestness. At first it seemed that the government might be open to reconsider, but this proved to be merely a way of putting us off in the hope that we would tire of our delays and change our minds about leaving. It became evident very soon that there would be no privileges restored, nor any new ones granted. "Die Stunde der Mennoniten in Rusland ist geschlagen"—The hour has struck for the Mennonites in Russia!

Naturally the question now was: "Lord, what would You have us do now?" For the answer to this question the Book of Truth was eagerly searched. Answers were found variously, but all seemed to say clearly: "Follow Me," according to Matthew 9:9; Luke 9:23; Matthew 8:22; and John 10:27 ff.

In the earlier period of Russia's re-militarization program, the talk everywhere where there were Mennonites, centered around: What now? Two options seemed to evolve: 1. To leave Russia, and to flee from the encroaching danger that threatened our faith, following what our Lord said in Luke 21:36; or 2. to stay in Russia, even if it meant that we might need to give our lives for our faith, as so many of our forefathers had done. The thinking on this question was divided. Some said: "If we place ourselves into the situation of which Jesus speaks in Luke 14:28, about counting the cost, we feel we are ill equipped to pay this price; therefore, we take with thankful hearts the further words of our Lord in Matthew 10:23, "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next;. . . ." Others presented yet different points of view; they said this was evidence of too small a faith if we pick up and leave. One must have faith and be ready to stand up for such faith regardless of the consequences and not flee from it. Increasingly we seemed to move toward the conclusion that we find another place to move to.

In spite of all the consideration given, the time was such that we felt pressured to come to a decision. It seemed more and more to point toward leaving Russia. But, where to? For a long period of time no clear voice, no definite answer was forthcoming. And yet, nothing seemed to stand out as conclusive as the fact that whatever we did, we wanted to move in *one* direction, and not two or more. Even this, although it

focused the question more sharply, did not yet give answer to the question: Shall we stay or shall we emigrate?

Clearly there were differing views, and we were now at the point where this was always the focus of our conversation and where each was trying to gain adherents to his own point of view. This soon developed into group meetings, where at various places sizable groups could meet considering this question. Finally, the Alexanderwohl Gemeinde decided to call a meeting in her church house on June 19, 1872, to consider this question. Here, too, the people were not of one mind. Some of the brethren wanted to send another delegation to the Czar directly at Petersburg. Others believed there had been enough such deputations to Russian officialdom; they wanted rather a deputation sent to America. On Friday of the next week, June 23, another ministers' conference had already been arranged for previously, and again the same question was raised: Shall the deputation be sent to Petersburg, or shall it be sent to America? The disagreement continued. There were strong feelings on the part of several ministers to send another deputation to Petersburg, in spite of the fact that those speaking from previous experiences at Petersburg clearly stated, "No salvation comes from Petersburg!" Those opposed to going to America said the Mennonites themselves were to blame; they had brought this on themselves, and kept directing their remarks toward a deputation to Petersburg. However, since attempts at seeing the Czar and getting from Russian officialdom favorable consideration of their requests had repeatedly failed, people increasingly lost faith in being able to stay in Russia and maintain their practice of freedom from military service. More and more turned toward sending a deputation to America. This resulted in many church meetings again, called in the several congregations, in order to become clear on what the mind of the people would conclude.

This brought us to the new year, and with a new year come new experiences and new beginnings. So it happened here too. On January 10, 1873, a conference was called for *those only* who favored sending a deputation to America and only these were invited. This was called in the Alexanderwohl Church. It brought together both ministers, elders, but also many other concerned brethren from various congregations. These had gathered for the express purpose of considering a

deputation to America. After careful consideration of many points that were still not clear, it was finally possible to come to the decision to send a deputation to America! Soon the deputants, too, were named from the various congregations and by mid-April of the same year the deputation was ready to embark for America to appraise the situation there relative to practices of freedom of religion, exemption from military service, and the possibility of entering the land to make our homes there.

By this time a point had been reached where feelings became difficult to reconcile. There were definitely two groups: the one set on leaving Russia and going to America; the other who said the time was not yet ripe for leaving. The latter group continued to press the issue, while those who had decided to emigrate had made up their minds and were beginning to anticipate preparations for emigration. Already here and there individual families were placing their homes and farms for sale, and this for a low price; however, few were sold at this particular point. At the same time more became convinced of emigration while still others decided the more firmly against it. What probably seemed the most difficult to many of these was the long ocean voyage, and they feared this. And so our distraught people floundered on the waves of indecision, from one side to the other. It became extremely difficult to counsel people for it was difficult to determine which decisions were made for the sake of conscience and what was done definitely and in all earnestness in order to follow the command of Christ. It was no small matter with which people were dealing, facing as they did the long and treacherous crossing of the ocean, and at the same time leaving behind all that they had built up through toil and tears, and to set out upon a venture in faith.

The first of our Russian Mennonites who set foot on American soil were the brethren Bernhard Warkentin, Peter Dueck, Philipp Wiebe, and another Mennonite, but a Russian citizen, by the name of Jacob Baer; these had gone in 1872. Now in 1873 the following congregations elected persons to serve on the deputation to America team: Molotschna, Bergthaler, Hutterthaler, and the Volhynian group. There were eleven from Russia, plus one who had been elected by the Mennonites in Prussia, making twelve in all. (Names of persons

elected, Grandfather does not give; they can, however, be supplied from other sources.)

Before these deputants had returned to Russia, the emigration had already begun. Of the Krimmer Mennonites, who were part of the Molotschna Mennonites, about 35 families left Russia early July, 1873, arriving in America about a month later. These settled in Minnesota, Dakota, and Kansas.

In the Molotschna Mennonite congregations the decision was reached to prepare for emigration in as reasonable a manner as possible and to do this as a unit. The congregations formed a corporation and elected from their midst two brethren who were to secure passports and to lay our case before the Russian government, and to stay in Petersburg with this request until permission was granted to leave. This was no small task and proved to be a real test of patience; a task which took until July of 1874 to bring it about.

In the meantime farms were being sold—some for half price and others for less, each taking as much as he could get, especially for his personal belongings. Farms and businesses that would have sold for 6,000 rubles would at the most bring 3,000, and many went for considerably lower prices than that. Furniture brought less than half its value, often a quarter of what it was worth. Grain and livestock had a better price.

The permits to leave Russia were promised already for March 1, but nothing was forthcoming; only repeated delays, with the obvious thought behind it that the emigration movement would lose momentum, that the people would tire of negative replies to their persistent entreaties, and finally the resolve to emigrate would die out. It became a real test even for the most devoted to the cause of emigration—would it finally come to the point where they would succumb to the Russian militarization movement?

The result was that our attempts for getting the leave permits was stepped up, and with increasing seriousness we implored the powers that be to grant permission to leave. Finally, on July 15, 1874, permission was granted! The hour had come! Our intercessions had brought fruit and in the City of Simferopol, about 200 miles from the Molotschna region, the papers could be had for handing out to the emigres.

The emigres responded quickly. On the 18th of July they

gathered in the Alexanderwohl Church to receive their permits to leave, and within two days they had all received their permits and had all the business transactions made relative to the voyage: money paid in and records made. There was now no further delay and on the 20th of July we were on our way!

But what heart-rending hours made up these days of leaving! Our people, who are peace-loving people, and who were used to living together and being with one another—visiting back and forth and in close proximity to each other—now suddenly were called upon to part! And who could tell but what this parting would be forever? They might actually not see one another again! And this separation was much more than the breaking of bonds between groups who were good friends; here were broken some of the very closest of ties: there were cases of parents taken from their children; father and son, mother and daughter bade each other a final farewell; brother with brother and sister with sister. There were seven days of heart-rending separations. Groups of families were taken to the railroad station at Michailoroka by friends from the several colonies on one day; the next day another group, and again the third day, and so on, until this particular railroad station came to be a place where the deep hurt of parting took place—parting which would likely be for the last time! Parting for those who were just good friends, and those who were very close and intimate, all were given expression through tears and embraces, placing the last endearing kiss upon one another's lips, and finally with a last "Leb Wohl!" that they called to one another as the time came for the train to pull out. What hours of crying and hurt of final parting! Would that these remain with us long in remembrance and for an eternal blessing!

The hour came and the train began to move. Both those who left and those who stayed behind waved their white kerchiefs of greetings and goodbys, until distance faded both out of sight. Thus under song, prayer, and tears we parted, as the train moved out and with deep hurt we were whisked away!

There were four groups. In the first three there were about 60 families, and in the last group about 36 families. These journeyed by train to Hamburg and there embarked on two ships for America. The first ship was the *Cimbria;* it was

already in the harbor when the third group arrived in Hamburg and about half of all our emigrants boarded it. On this ship were many others besides Mennonites, perhaps as many who were not Mennonites as were Mennonites. On the second ship, the *Teutonia,* all were Mennonites from the Molotschna, except for eight families. Not all who boarded the *Teutonia* came to settle with us in Kansas. Some went to Nebraska and some to Dakota, but close to 100 families did come to Kansas, settling north of the Little Arkansas River, and west of the Turkey Creek, on an area comprising about 35 sections, within the borders of this river and creek. Here we settled in 1874 in the month of October. To the Great God and Father who guides and protects in such marvelous way be glory and praise!! He guided over sea and over land; He protected; He sustained; He led us. May His holy will be done!!

As stated, we were brought across the great waters in two ships, on the Hamburg American Packetfahrt Actien Company, called Boltens Line. The first ship left August 12 from Hamburg, while ours left Sunday, the 16th of August (German time), for New York. Before our second ship, the smaller one, left the Hamburg harbor, a short sermon was preached marking our embarkment and marking as well our leaving as emigres for a new land. The text was John 14:18 "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you"; it was between eight and nine in the morning. Many prayers and many tears ascended to the throne of God in this hour of sacrificial worship. There were hundreds of people, not only aboard ship, but also on the shores and water's edge, to whom God's Word of power was laid upon their hearts with emphasis. Many a soul longed with anticipation for what was coming; but others —had it not gone as far as it had, would have turned right around and gone back! For virtually everyone it was a time for inner searching of the heart before the penetrating eyes of God: Could we—(could I)—be confident in the face of all behind us, and before us, that He was Master of all, and in Whose keeping I could safely entrust myself? Many, I am confident, also found that "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength," as the Psalm writer says; confident that the Will of God would prevail!

Amid all these deep emotions and mixed feelings, finally the big, powerful engine that propelled the ship began to

exercise its power and moved the ship out to sea, quite oblivious of all the emotions and feelings of her cargo—pilgrims embarking on a voyage to a new land! About a thousand Mennonite souls were on board the *Teutonia;* hardly was there room to find comfortable quarters for travel. In addition, another eight families who were not Mennonites, processed also by August Bolten, journeyed with us to New York. The ship was so full that any occasion for comfort was impossible to obtain.

We were on board ship almost 18 days. We saw a great deal and experienced even more, especially the wonderful grace of God, His marvelous care, and the strong arm of the Almighty always undergirding us. He kept the waves in control that they did not overwhelm us. There was some wind but no great storms. There was, however, much fog. While moving around Scotland going north, the atmosphere was very cool for this hot season of the year. We used our storm coats and our winter clothing which felt very comfortable. (In parenthesis: "Likely no one was so glad to be free from the fetters of Russian enslavement as Dietrich Gaeddert and Peter Balzer, who had worked out the passports and travel arrangements for these people.")

Finally, after much waiting and long anticipation, early Wednesday morning, September 2, came the call: "Land in sight!" We landed about noon, after a medical doctor had come aboard to inspect the ship, and the ship had been pushed to land. However, it still required patient waiting for several hours before we could disembark according to regulations. It was late afternoon before we could set foot upon the long anticipated American soil, and there find a place to stay for the night. In the Castle Garden we were given a large open room, and here, after we had become somewhat settled, late that evening we arranged ourselves for a worship service. In prayer and in song we brought praise and thanksgiving to the Father, Who had so wonderfully guided us. In the morning a Bible agent came and gave us many New Testaments, spoke words of welcome, wished us peace in our newly-found blessed America. Within two days we were ready with our money exchanges and our tickets so that Friday early evening we began in three parties our westward, inland journey. Two of the parties went to Topeka, Kansas, and one

to Lincoln, Nebraska, each family making its own choice of where to go. Not all came out to everyone's satisfaction in this decision of where to go. Some felt it was not handled quite right. But wherever a group involves many people, there will also be many points of view. Another factor was that the first ship load (the *Cimbria*) had already left the Castle Gardens before we arrived. Their aim was to go to Nebraska. Many who had friends and relatives on the first ship wanted to follow them and go where they would go. But the majority of the people from our ship wanted to go directly to Kansas to settle there. It happened that many who had gone to Nebraska did not find it to their liking, so they, too, came to Kansas and settled about 14 miles east of us, in a settlement as large, if not larger, than ours. Only about 36 families stayed in Nebraska. Looking at it from this perspective, it seems that whoever made the decision according to his own conviction, under God's guidance, and whoever did not let himself be guided by lesser reasons, found himself under the blessing of God, whether settling in Kansas or in Nebraska. Their children and children's children need not smart under the decisions of their elders, for if God has so led, who can say that one is right and the other wrong?

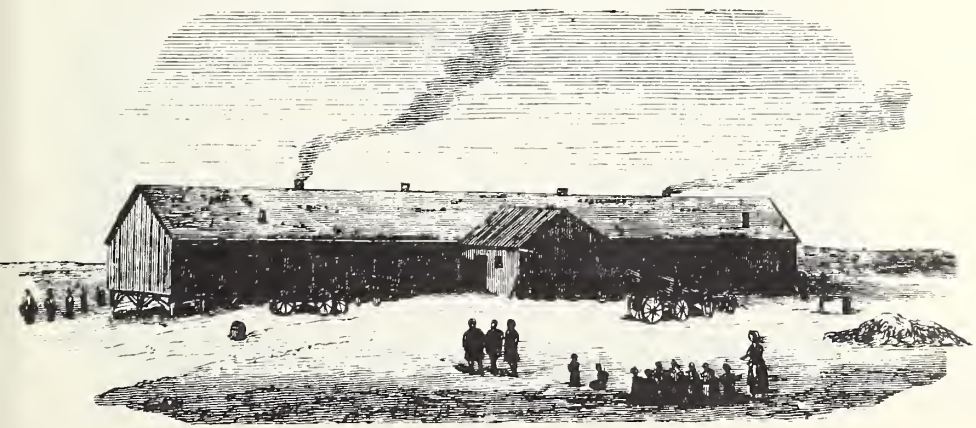
In our settlement, coming from several Molotschna Mennonite congregations and settling here together, we soon began talking and planning to form our own congregation here. So word went out to all persons who were members of congregations, to come together for the purpose of talking over plans for forming a congregation and to consider the type of church practices to adopt for ourselves. It was agreed that before we form a congregation we would begin a Church Record Book. In this book there should appear a short history as preface, and there would also be written briefly certain congregational policy matters and guidelines, and that these serve as guides for the formation and the operation of our congregation. Both the congregational policies and the guidelines for operation would be based solidly upon the solid rock of God's Word and not cater to the desires of men. This then was done and in this same Church Record should be entered all the names of individuals and families who are agreed to abide by these ordinances.

Chapter V

SETTLING IN KANSAS

From Topeka they came west by train.

> A visit to the bridge shops this morning disclosed a scene of the greatest activity. Large numbers of people were there with horses and cows to sell, some of which were good, but more old and disabled; it was of no use to try and sell this last kind to the Mennonites—they know what they want and how much to pay for it, and a fair price for such stock and other things as they need, but they do not want any old mowers or worn out cider mills, or any other useless lumber that some people think can be palmed off on them because they cannot speak English. The stock so far purchased by them is rather better than the average, and was got at very good prices for both buyer and seller. These people pay cash and they are right in having to work for their money.[1]



Heads of families had come first to select the land they wanted to buy and on which to settle their family. They acquired this land from the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. This company had received large grants for building a road through the "wild west." This land was purchased for two and one-half dollars an acre, payable within eleven years with six percent interest. The company gave two sections of land for the poor, with an "immigrant house," one hundred feet long by sixteen feet wide, built of adobe brick.[2]

Their first task was to build homes. It was already the fall of the year. Many began almost immediately to build homes, while they took shelter meanwhile in the immigration house. Some constructed sod houses, which consisted of plowed sod put one layer upon another, with roofs made of posts or limbs across the top and covered with a thick layer of slew grass. Others would build frame structures, with lumber they would get from the lumberyards which were already beginning to spring up near the railroads. Some of these were temporary structures until time and means would permit the more permanent homes.

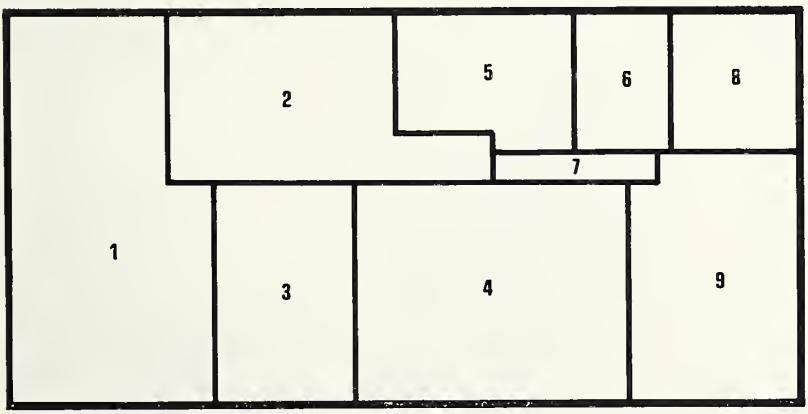
Dietrich Gaeddert Residence
Stone building

Furniture during the first years was crude. Again quoting Unruh from information obtained from personal interview:

> We had no chairs, no tables, and no bedsteads. For a table we used two big barrels and two boards across the barrels. The chairs consisted of boxes or little barrels. Very often a box at each end and a plank across the top was used for a bench. The floor was kept smooth and if possible would scatter sand. For bedding we used hay upon which we spread our comforts and blankets. We brought our own tableware along from Russia, like spoons, forks, knives, and dishes, and also iron kettles.[3]

The brick oven which was also the heating stove for usually four rooms was an ingenious arrangement. It was built of adobe brick that formed the inside walls, reaching partially into four rooms. A large firebox with a large opening for burning hay, straw, cow chips, or sometimes wood. Above this firebox was the oven for baking; and often the chimney arrangement had a place where meat could be smoked as the hams were hung for smoke curing. This oven served several purposes: heating not only the kitchen in which the oven was located, but the rooms adjacent to the oven; cooking and baking, and even a smoke-curing space for home butchered meats.

The houses may well have varied, especially when the more permanent homes were being built. The following is a drawing of the interior arrangement of Dietrich Gaeddert's home:



1. Sommerstube. 2. Hinterhaus (a sand floor for fire safety). 3. Forhaus. 4. Groszstube. 5. Kueche. 6. Kleinstube. 7. Brick stove heating four rooms. 8. Schlafstube. 9. Groszstube.[4]

The houses had to be large enough for the large families. Usually each house had at least three bedrooms, one for parents and the small children, one for the boys, and one for the girls, and in many cases a guest bedroom. Of course, the *Kleinstube* or *Sommerstube* could also be used as guest bedrooms. Visiting was very common—as Dietrich Gaeddert's diary frequently indicates, especially in Russia, and often guests needed to stay overnight.

The yard arrangement around the house was also patterned after the Russian yards they were used to. There were flower gardens often in front of the house; the backyard had a vegetable garden, and usually a sizable orchard. The families raised what food products they used almost entirely, canning and preserving fruits and vegetables for winter use.

Not all was simple nor easy in those days. One of the most dire needs came early, and that was money with which to pay for the land they bought, buildings needed, and to meet payments on their loans. Had it not been for help from other Mennonite groups in other areas, it would have been much more difficult. One very real source of help was the Board

Early Pioneer House

of Guardians that came into being largely through the work of certain individuals, particularly Bernhard Warkentin, Christian Krehbiel, David Goerz, and others from the states farther east where Mennonites were living in large numbers. Christian Krehbiel had come to America from the Palatinate, Germany, and through hard years of pioneering in which he helped his parents clear a homestead, and then set out to build his own, lived for many years in Summerfield, Illinois. It was from Summerfield that he was very helpful to many other Mennonite settlers, including the Kansas Mennonites. It was through Krehbiel's efforts that the Board of Guardians originated, and as its president he formulated its plans and directed its activities. Through this committee great savings were gained for the immigrants. Bernard Warkentin, who had come to America as one of the "Kundschafter" to spy out the land, had stayed in Kansas, settled in Halstead. It was not long until he and Christian Krehbiel were in contact with one another. David Goerz, a teacher who came early in the 1870s, was a third member of the Board of Guardians. Goerz was later elected a minister and became minister and leader of the Halstead Mennonite Church. Through the efforts of each of these men and others from the Eastern Mennonites, they averted many hardships and annoyances for the immigrants, and made it possible for some to emigrate who otherwise would not have been able to come.

The Mennonites brought some money with them, some more than others, but even for those who had brought several thousand rubles, it took much money to buy the land, pay the transportation costs, build homes, and build the other buildings necessary on the farms. Crops were not always good either. Grasshoppers, storms, hail, were but a few of the sources of trouble. It is to be remembered too that provisions were made in Russia for all to come, whether they could pay transportation or not. Exactly how they provided for the poor is not in the records, but they were not obliged to stay in Russia. If any felt that they could not stay in clear conscience with military service exemptions being denied them but did not have the money to migrate, it was provided that these too could emigrate. Here in America it was again made possible for the poor also to come into possession of land and to provide for their families.

Most of the land in the Hoffnungsau area was sold to the

Mennonites by the Santa Fe at $3.50 an acre. They could buy this by paying 7% of the sale price and the balance in eleven years 6% interest. This seems like generous terms by standards today—to buy a half section for $1,110 with 7% of the sale price, or $77.70 to be paid down and the balance in 11 years. That does not seem impossible. However, this became a very real difficult task to meet the payments, as Dietrich Gaeddert's manuscript collection in the Archives of Bethel College so forcefully states.

Resources they brought were gone by the spring of 1875. Early in the spring of that year some 43 heads of families met to ask their leader, Dietrich Gaeddert, to go to Pennsylvania and there direct their requests for a loan. The brethren here knew full well that much help had already come from fellow Mennonites in America, especially through the Board of Guardians. They were not asking for a gift, but in a business like manner they would pledge themselves jointly for the capital amount, so that the granters of the loan would be assured repayment. They authorized Gaeddert to give a note or certificate which they would accept as their own. Other papers that would be needed they would authorize Gaeddert to provide, giving the Hoffnungsau Mennonites mutual responsibility for the same. Knowing full well what kind of position they were placing Gaeddert into they said:

> Do not grow faint in asking and in knocking until we see our requests answered and our most pressing necessities are satisfied. Meanwhile, we do not wish to neglect to ask God the giver of all good and perfect gifts that he will be your strength, comfort and counselor in the execution of this difficult task. May He through the help of the brethren dry the tears of those who cry to Him and may your return wipe their tears.[5]

Fifty-seven heads of households signed the document. They also signed a surety certificate or pledge, which carried 69 signatures. Gaeddert took these certificates and went to Pennsylvania. It appears that his headquarters may have been at Gabriel Baer, Mount Joy, Pennsylvania. He was successful in receiving the loan. Forty-six Pennsylvania Mennonites loaned all the way from $50 to $500 each, secured by a note promising payment three years after date, at 6% interest.

It is altogether possible that this loan enabled many to survive during those difficult pioneer years. If help had not

come from fellow Mennonites in Pennsylvania, it might have been impossible to get it elsewhere.

It became very difficult, however, to meet the payments on these loans. Three years went by, and the notes were due, but payments could not be made. In 1880 it was five years. Correspondence indicated that the brethren from Pennsylvania were reminding Gaeddert that . . . "Nevertheless, beloved brethren, the sooner you will repay the money, the more confidence there will be."[6]

The 1880's were difficult years in Kansas, and much more difficult than the brethren who had pledged their bond to these loans had foreseen. It gets to be 1885, and still the loans are not paid. Five hundred dollars had been received the following summer (in 1886); however, this was to be applied as interest, and the next May $1,512.87 was due. It was not possible for many to make payments. Gaeddert made some smaller personal loans also which he could and did repay on schedule, and an amount apparently loaned late in 1899 to Gaeddert of $250, he uses to hasten the repayment of the $10,000.

It must have been difficult for all concerned. The incident does come to a good end, however. Letters went from Pennsylvania to Kansas, and from Kansas back to Pennsylvania. By this time it is a Mr. Nissley who is handling the collections. October 1, 1886, he still holds "the sack" for $225.86; the following February he receives $200, and soon after the remaining $44, closing the account. A personal friendship between Nissley and Gaeddert had developed. Nissley writes with some endearment about the time he visited at Gaedderts', three years back, and his journey since then to California. So the $10,000 loan becomes history; something we would rather forget, but history is made with and through the elements of hardship and human toil and struggle as well as the brighter periods and occasions that come our way and achievements that spell success.

This may be an appropriate place to print a copy of the Teutonia ship list. It is reproduced here by courtesy of the Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. This is the shipload of persons, one thousand and ten of them, who embarked at Hamburg, Germany on August 16, 1874, and arrived in New York, U.S.A. September 3, of the same year. Its ship master was C. B. Ludwig; and

leader of the Mennonites on board was Rev. Dietrich Gaeddert, 37 year old Mennonite minister ordained in the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Russia. Of the 1010 people on the ship all but eight families were Mennonites.

It may be of interest to many people to find the names of parents, grandparents, or other ancestors in this ship list, and thus trace their ancestors' coming to America.

The group was a remarkably young group. A listing is arranged here of these 1010 persons into the age groups given:

3 were in the 70s
1 was in the 80s
14 were in the 60s
53 were in the 50s
92 were in the 40s
80 were in the 30s
177 were in the 20s
191 were between 10 and 19 years of age
399 were below ten years of age, and of these 399 there were 101 babies eleven months old or younger

In other words more than half of them, almost six-tenths, were below 19 years of age. Two-fifths of the group was below ten years of age. One-tenth of the group was less than a year old.

Serial No.	Name	Age	Occupation & Relationship
1	Robert Raphael	22	merchant
2	Carl Eisenberg	23	tailor
3	Mesche J. Stevrinsky	14	single
4	Rteve Stevrinsky	8	sister
5	Rachel Stevrinsky	7	sister
6	Gittel Levy	50	woman
7	Sara Steinbach	37	woman
8	Danny Steinbach	11 mo.	infant
9	Charles Kjarnander	49	Carpenter
10	Gerhard Abraham	43	farmer
11	Catha. Abraham	51	wife
12	Nicolai, Abraham	25	son
13	Johann Abraham	22	son
14	Peter Abraham	20	son
15	Hrh. Abraham	16	son
16	Jacob Abraham	15	son
17	Dietrich Abraham	9	son
18	Cathar. Abraham	24	daughter
19	Marie Abraham	18	daughter
20	Elisb. Abraham	13	daughter
21	Margr. Abraham	9	daughter
22	Tobias Voth	29	farmer
23	Anna Voth	28	wife
24	Joh. Voth	8	child
25	Abr. Voth	11 mo.	infant (m.)
26	Jacob Claasen	41	farmer
27	Margr. Claasen	40	wife
28	Juste Claasen	17	child (f.)
29	Jacob Claasen	16	child
30	Margr. Claasen	14	child
31	Helene Claasen	9	child
32	Anna Claasen	7	child
33	Isaac Claasen	6	child
34	Sara Claasen	3	child
35	Marie Claasen	4 mo.	infant
36	Joh. Claasen	4 mo.	infant
37	Isaac Claasen	42	farmer
38	Sara Claasen	37	wife
39	Peter Claasen	15	child
40	Sara Claasen	13	child
41	Juste Claasen	9	child (f.)
42	Isaac Claasen	5	child
43	Margr. Claasen	5	child
44	Catha. Claasen	8 mo.	infant
45	Joh. Claassen	28	farmer
46	Eva Claassen	26	wife
47	Joh. Claassen	5	child
48	Joh. Friesen	55	farmer
49	Anna Friesen	55	wife
50	Peter Friesen	21	child
51	Catha. Friesen	17	child
52	Helene Friesen	15	child
53	Jacob Friesen	9	child
54	Hrch. Epp	23	farmer
55	Sara Epp	23	wife
56	Cornelius Epp	11 mo.	infant
57	Jacob Friesen	32	farmer
58	Anna Friesen	30	wife
59	Joh. Friesen	8	child
60	Anna Friesen	5	child
61	Jacob Friesen	3	child
62	Peter Buller	50	farmer
63	Helene Buller	45	wife
64	Hrch Buller	22	child

65 Elizabeth Buller 20 child
66 Peter Buller 17 child
67 Helene Buller 15 child
68 Jacob Buller 9 child
69 David Buller 8 child
70 Catha. Buller 7 child
71 Joh. Buller 6 child
72 Marie Buller 3 child
73 Peter Schroeder 38 farmer
74 Catha. Schroeder 36 wife
75 Susanne Schroeder 9 child
76 Catha. Schroeder 8 child
77 Peter Schroeder 3 child
78 Anna Schroeder 3 mo. infant
79 Joh. Schroeder 24 farmer
80 Diedrich Ens 36 farmer

81 Judith Ens 32 wife
82 Jacob Ens 14 child
83 Aron Ens 9 child
84 Diedrich Ens 3 child
85 Judith Ens 8 child
86 Catha. Ens 7 child
87 Susanne Ens 5 child
88 Gerhard Thiessen 65 farmer
89 Gerhard Thiessen 21 child
90 Joh. Thiessen 20 child
91 Jacob Thiessen 19 child
92 Abraham Thiessen 17 child
93 Peter Thiessen 15 child
94 Hrh. Thiessen 9 child
95 Margr. Thiessen 8 child
96 Cornelius Thiessen 7 child
97 Aron Thiessen 5 child
98 Helene Thiessen 3 child
99 David Welk 40 farmer
100 Sara Welk 23 wife

101 Sara Welk 11 mo. infant
102 Margr. Welk 1 mo. infant
Kreker?
103 Abrah. Krehler ? 29 farmer
104 Marie Krehler 28 wife
105 Gerha. Krehler 6 child
106 Abrah. Krehler 4 child
107 Jacob Krehler 3 child
108 Peter Krehler 9 mo. child
109 Hrch. Ediger 53 farmer
110 Sara Ediger 44 wife
111 Peter Ediger 19 child
112 Hrch. Ediger 18 child
113 Sara Ediger 16 child
114 Elizabeth Ediger 13 child
115 Catha. Ediger 9 child
116 Jacob Ediger 8 child
117 Marie Ediger 4 child
118 David Ediger 11 mo. infant
119 Franz Spenst 29 farmer
120 Catha. Spenst 30 wife

121 Marie Spenst 4 child
122 Elizabeth Spenst 2 mo. infant
123 Abraham Heinrich 56 farmer
124 Marie Heinrich 54 wife
125 Joh. Heinrich 25 child
126 Marie Heinrich 28 child
127 Anna Heinrich 21 child
128 Jacob Heinrich 18 child
129 Helene Heinrich 16 child
130 Abraham Heinrich 14 child
131 Elizabeth Heinrich 9 child
132 Hrch. Kluever 47 farmer
133 Susanne Kluever 35 wife
134 Hrch. Kluever 20 child
135 Gerhard Kluever 19 child
136 Joh. Kluever 18 child
137 Catha. Kluever 17 child
138 Marie Kluever 14 child
139 Susanne Kluever 9 child
140 Peter Kluever 7 child

141 Cornelius Kluever 4 child
142 Anna Kluever 4 child
143 David Penner 43 farmer
144 Sara Penner 46 wife
145 David Penner 9 child
146 Catha. Penner 8 child
147 Elish. Penner 7 child

150 Johann Balzer 21 farmer
148 Gertrude Penner 6 child
149 Anna Penner 5 child
151 Sara Balzer 20 wife
152 Sara Balzer 2 mo. infant
153 Andr. Flamming 50 farmer
154 Helene Flamming 51 wife
155 Eva Flamming 20 child
156 Peter Flamming 18 child
157 Catha Flamming 16 child
158 Agneta Flamming 14 child
159 Johann Flamming 9 child
160 Cornelius Dahlke 42 farmer

161 Anna Dahlke 35 wife
162 Cornel. Dahlke 16 child (male)
163 Joh. Dahlke 14 child
164 Catha Dalke 9 child
165 Peter Dahlke 8 child
166 Hrch Dalke 7 child
167 Anna Dahlke 6 child
168 Jacob Dahlke 5 child
169 Helena Dahlke 3 child
170 Hrch Dirksen 30 farmer
171 Cornel. Duerksen 48 farmer
172 Gertrude Duerksen 44 wife
173 Cornel. Duerksen 19 child (male)
174 Hrch. Duerksen 9 child
175 Anna Duerksen 17 child
176 Sara Duerksen 15 child
177 Helene Duerksen 5 child
178 Hrch. Duerksen 8 child
179 Isaac Duerksen 6 child
180 Marie Duerksen 13 child

181 Jacob Duerksen 47 farmer
182 Hrch. Lorenz 23 farmer
183 Elisb. Lorenz 22 wife
184 Elisb. Lorenz 10 mo. infant
185 Anna Duerksen 7 child
186 Peter Lorenc 62 farmer
187 Elish. Lorenc 53 wife
188 Jacob Lorenc 21 child
189 Joh. Lorenc 17 child
190 Marie Lorenc 14 child
191 Franz Penner 23 farmer
192 Sara Penner 21 wife
193 Frz. Penner 2 mo. infant
194 Jacob Franz 32 farmer
195 Catha. Franz 30 wife
196 Catha. Franz 6 child
197 Hrch. Franz 5 child
198 Anna Franz 7 mo. child
199 Joh. Thiessen 29 farmer
200 Marie Thiessen 29 wife

201 Marie Thiessen 4 daughter
202 Jacob Martens 45 farmer
203 Anna Martens 47 wife
204 Marie Martens 9 child
205 Hrch. Martens 46 farmer
206 Jacob Siemens 24 farmer
207 Anna Siemens 20 wife
208 Anna Siemens 6 mo. infant
209 Jacob Siemens 49 farmer
210 Elizabeth Siemens 45 wife
211 Anna Siemens 20 child
212 Elizabeth Siemens 19 child
213 Joh. Siemens 15 child
214 Abraham Siements 13 child
215 David Siemens 9 child
216 Agathe Siemens 3 child
217 Hrch. Siemens 6 mo. child
218 Joh. Wahl 30 farmer
219 Elis. Wahl 30 wife
220 Elis. Wahl 6 child

221 Joh. Wahl 5 child
222 Anna Wahl 3 child
223 Catha. Wahl 11 mo. infant
224 Peter Wahl 1 mo. infant
225 David Eduger 23 farmer
226 Helene Eduger 22 wife
227 Agathe Eduger 6 mo. infant
228 Helene Eduger 6 mo. infant
229 Peter Lorenz 29 farmer
230 Catha. Lorenz 33 wife
231 Juste Lorenz 9 child (f.)

232 Abr. Lorenz 4 child
233 Elisb. Lorenz 3 child
234 Peter Lorenz 7 mo. infant
235 Jacob Friesen 23 farmer
236 David Eduger 51 farmer
237 Agathe Eduger 51 wife
238 Jacob Eduger 20 child
239 Johann Edniger 18 child
240 Hrch. Edniger 14 child
241 Agathe Edniger 16 child
242 Marie Eduger 9 child
243 Gerhard Enz 46 farmer
244 Helene Enz 40 wife
245 Gerhard Enz 18 child
246 Sara Enz 15 child
247 Helene Enz 9 child
248 Elisb. Enz 5 child
249 Marie Enz 4 mo. child
250 Anna Harder 47 farmer (f.) (shipmaster's mistake)
251 Jacob Harder 20 wife (m.) (shipmaster's mistake)
252 Marie Harder 13 child
253 Agathe Harder 9 child
254 Abrah. Harder 7 child
255 Joh. Harder 5 child
256 Jrch. Frichring? Frichting? 26 farmer
257 Anna Frichring 25 wife
258 Jacob Frichring 3 child
259 Hrch Frichring 9 mo. infant
260 Abraham Frichring 9 mo. infant
261 Jacob Schulz 31 farmer
262 Elisb. Schulz 28 wife
263 Jacob Schulz 4 child
264 Hrch. Schulz 5 mo. infant
265 Hrh. Franz 50 farmer
266 Sara Franz 49 wife
267 Peter Franz 8 child
268 Anna Franz 16 child
269 Sara Franz 9 child
270 Hrch. Franz 9 child
271 Hrch. Kimkel 29 farmer
272 Marie Kimkel 28 wife
273 Jacob Kimkel 11 mo. infant
274 Cornel. Wall 34 farmer
275 Helene Wall 33 wife
276 Jacob Wall 9 child
277 Johann Wall 6 child
278 Cornel. Wall 8. mo. infant
279 Catha. Wall 7 child
280 Marga. Wall 3 child
281 Jacob Janszen 42 farmer
282 Catha. Janszen 39 wife
283 Jacob Janszen 17 child
284 Hrch. Janszen 15 child
285 Peter Janszen 9 child
286 Carnel. Janzen 8 child
287 Cathe. Janszen 4 child
288 Abr. Janszen 11 mo. infant
289 Franz Janszen 1 mo. infant
290 Christoph Hinz 46 farmer
291 Johe Hinz 40 wife
292 Emil Hinz 18 child
293 Herm. Hinz 9 child
294 Juls Hinz 7 child (male)
295 Mathe. Hinz 4 child (f).
296 Hrch. Hinz 3 mo. infant
297 David Janszen 24 farmer
298 Judith Janszen 22 wife
299 David Janszen 3 child
300 Hrch. Janszen 3 mo. infant
301 Marie Franz 53 woman
302 Joh. Franz 20 son
303 Nicolai Franz 15 son
304 Helene Franz 9 daughter
305 Wilh. Nickel 39 farmer
306 Marie Nickel 40 wife
307 Gerh. Nickel 13 child
308 Anna Nickel 9 child
309 Marie Nickel 3 child
310 Catha. Sperling 46 woman
311 Catha. Sperling 24 daughter
312 Joh. Sperling 22 son
313 Elisab. Sperling 22 daughter
314 Abraham Sperling 18 son
315 Jacob Sperling 15 son
316 Cornel. Sperling 13 son
317 Peter Sperling 8 son
318 Gerhard Sperling 6 son
319 Helene Sperling 5 mo. infant
320 Cornel. Funck 50 farmer
321 Agneta Funck 48 wife
322 Anna Funck 20 child
323 Hrch. Funck 19 child
324 Agneta Funck 17 child
325 Catha. Funck 16 child
326 Helene Funck 9 child
327 Peter Funck 6 child
328 Earhard Funck 9 child
329 Joh. Funck 8 child
330 Elizabeth Funck 6 child
331 Jacob Funck 26 farmer
332 Helene Funck 21 wife
333 Joh. Nickel 44 farmer
334 Elisabeth Nickel 44 wife
335 Gerhard Nickel 19 child
336 Joh. Nickel 16 child
337 Wilh. Nickel 9 child
338 Elisb. Nickel 4 child
339 Hrch. Nickel 6 mo. infant
340 Abr. Neufeld 53 farmer
341 Elish. Neufeld 54 wife
342 Aron Neufeld 30 son
343 Anna Neufeld 20 daughter
344 Elish. Neufeld 10 mo. infant
345 Cornel. Wedel 36 farmer
346 Eva Wedel 26 wife
347 Cornel. Wedel 14 child
348 Anna Wedel 9 child
349 Peter Wedel 8 child
350 Jacob Wedel 7 child
351 Hrch. Wedel 11 mo. infant
352 Joh. Wedel 20 farmer
353 Peter Kluver 49 farmer
354 Margr. Kluver 38 wife
355 Hrch Kluver 15 child
356 Joh. Kluver 10 mo. infant
357 Margr. Kluver 13 child
358 Marie Kluver 9 child
359 Helene Kluver 7 child
360 Elish. Kluver 3 child
361 Peter Kluver 21 farmer
362 Elisabeth Kluver 22 wife
363 Peter Kluver 11 mo. infant
364 Hrch. Schmidt 35 farmer
365 Anna Schmidt 36 wife
366 Helene Schmidt 16 child
367 Susanne Schmidt 14 child
368 Abraham Schmidt 9 child
369 Sara Schmidt 8 child
370 Elisb. Schmidt 5 child
371 Marie Schmidt 2 mo. infant
372 Hrch Schmidt 2 mo. infant
373 Peter Ratzlaff 44 farmer
374 Eva Ratzlaff 47 wife
375 Marie Ratzlaff 22 child
376 Peter Ratzlaff 21 child
377 Hinr. Ratzlaff 14 child (male)
378 Eva Ratzlaff 18 child
379 Jacob Ratzlaff 9 child
380 Anna Ratzlaff 8 child
381 Catha. Ratzlaff 7 child
382 Hrich Nicker 44 farmer
383 Gertr. Nicker 42 wife
384 Abraham Nicker 21 child
385 Hrch. Nicker 17 child
386 Joh. Nicker 16 child
387 Herm. Nicker 13 child
388 Jacob Nicker 9 child
389 Martin Nicker 7 child
390 Gerhard Nicker 4 child
391 Gertrude Nicker 7 mo. infant
392 Abraham Richert 50 farmer
393 Eva Richert 53 wife
394 Hrch. Richert 23 child
395 Jacob Richert 14 child
396 Jacob Richert 9 child

397	Peter Richert	8		child
398	Peter Heidebrecht	36		farmer
399	Elisb. Heidebrecht	35		wife
400	Peter Heidebrecht	9		child
401	Elisb. Heidebrecht	8		child
402	Hrch Heidebrecht	7		child
403	Cornel. Heidebrecht	6		child
404	Jacob Heidebrecht	5		child
405	Joh Heidebrecht	4		child
406	Catha. Heidebrecht	3		child
407	Diedr. Heidebrecht	6	mo. infant	(m)
408	Gerh. Franz	38		farmer
409	Anna Franz	23		wife
410	Susane Franz	14		child
411	Anna Franz	9		child
412	Gerha. Franz	8		child
413	Hrch. Franz	6		child
414	Peter Franz	5	mo. infant	
415	Peter Sperling	33		farmer
416	Anna Sperling	29		wife
417	Benj. Sperling	16		child
418	Anna Sperling	8		child
419	Cornel. Sperling	6		child
420	Hrch. Sperling	4		child
421	Peter Sperling	11	mo. infant	
422	Helene Sperling	1	mo. infant	
423	Abraham Zuhlcker	23		farmer
424	Helene Zuhlcher	19		wife
425	Jacob Zuhlcker	6	mo. infant	
426	Peter Heidebrecht	62		farmer
427	Carnelie Heidebrecht	64		wife
428	Carnelius Heidebrecht	24		farmer
429	Carnelie Heidebrecht	24		wife
430	Anna Heidebrecht	11	mo. infant	
431	Joh. Heidebrecht	24		farmer
432	Catha. Heidebrecht	21		wife
433	Joh. Voth	25		farmer
434	Helene Voth	19		wife
435	Joh. Voth	3	mo. infant	
436	Franz Neumann	53		farmer
437	Helene Neumann	48		wife
438	Susanne Neumann	18		child
439	Marie Neumann	16		child
440	Abraham Neumann	14		child
441	Jacob Neumann	14		child
442	Catha. Neumann	9		child
443	Elisab. Neumann	8		child
444	Helene Neumann	7		child
445	Jacob Braun	27		farmer
446	Marie Braun	27		wife
447	Marie Braun	5		child
448	Elisb. Braun	3		child
449	Jacob Braun	11	mo. infant	
450	Joh. Braun	1	mo. infant	
451	Hrch. Ratzlaff	55		farmer
452	Elisb. Ratzlaff	44		wife
453	Hrch. Ratzlaff	22		child
454	Peter Ratzlaff	21		child
455	Joh. Ratzlaff	7		child
456	Anna Ratzlaff	8		child
457	Catha. Ratzlaff	15		child
458	Helene Ratzlaff	14		child
459	Peter Nickel	40		farmer
460	Catha. Nickel	35		wife
461	Peter Nickel	14		child
462	Jacob Nickel	5		child
463	Joh. Nickel	3		child
464	Joh. Claasen	30		farmer
465	Elisb. Claasen	25		wife
466	Hrch. Claasen	3		child
467	Elisb. Claasen	11	mo. infant	
468	Anna Claasen	1	mo. infant	
469	Hrch. Kohn	57		farmer
470	Anna Kohn	52		wife
471	Anna Kohn	20		child
472	David Kohn	15		child
473	Sara Kohn	9		child
474	Peter Warkentin	25		farmer
475	Marie Warkentin	25		wife
476	Cornel. Kohn	30		farmer
477	Wilha. Kohn	20		wife
478	Joh. Kohn	28		farmer
479	Juste Kohn	25		wife
480	Jacob Kohn	4		child
481	Hrch. Kohn	2	mo. infant	
482	Joh. Flamming	25		farmer
483	Helene Flamming	23		wife
484	Wm. Janzen	59		farmer
485	Agneta Janzen	46		wife
486	Sara Janzen	19		child
487	Wilh. Janzen	15		child (male)
488	Gerha. Janzen	7	mo. infant	
489	Hrch. Dahl	41		farmer
490	Anna Dahl	38		wife
491	Hrch. Dahl	9		child
492	Peter Dahl	8		child
493	Joh. Dahl	3		child
494	Cornel. Dahl	7	mo. infant	
495	Peter Dahlake	56		farmer
496	Helene Dahlake	55		wife
497	Elisb. Dahlake	23		daughter
498	Hrch. Dahlake	18		son
499	Peter Dahlcke	27		farmer
500	Catha. Dahlcke	23		wife
501	Catha. Dahlcke	3		child
502	Marie Dahlcke	4	mo. infant	
503	Peter Ratzlaff	61		farmer
504	Marie Ratzlaff	59		wife
505	David Ratzlaff	27		son
506	Anna Ratzlaff	19		daughter
507	Hrch. Ratzlaff	17		son
508	Catha. Ratzlaff	15		daughter
509	Abraham Ratzlaff	24		farmer
510	Helene Ratzlaff	20		wife
511	Marie Ratzlaff	6	mo. infant	
512	Jacob Ratzlaff	35		farmer
513	Elisb. Ratzlaff	42		wife
514	Hrch. Ratzlaff	19		son
515	Peter Ratzlaff	13		son
516	Catha. Ratzlaff	16		daughter
517	Benj. Ratzlaff	35		farmer
518	Catha. Ratzlaff	32		wife
519	Marie, Ratzlaff	7		child
520	Catha. Ratzlaff	3		child
521	Helene Ratzlaff	11	mo. infant	
522	Peter Ratzlaff	1	mo. infant	
523	Johann Ratzlaff	32		farmer
524	Catha. Ratzlaff	27		wife
525	Catha. Ratzlaff	6		child
526	Peter Ratzlaff	4		child
527	Marie Ratzlaff	8	mo. infant	
528	Sara Ratzlaff	8	mo. infant	
529	Peter Ratzlaff	38		farmer
530	Anna Ratzlaff	38		wife
531	Anna Ratzlaff	14		child
532	Peter Ratzlaff	9		child
533	Johann Ratzlaff	4		child
534	Catha. Ratzlaff	6		child
535	Cornelius Ratzlaff	1	mo. infant	
536	Peter Ratzlaff	58		farmer
537	Helene Ratzlaff	48		wife
538	Peter Ratzlaff	14		child
539	Benj. Ratzlaff	6		child
540	Hrch. Schulz	38		farmer
541	Eva Sshulz	46		wife
542	Peter Schulz	23		son
543	Jacob Schulz	19		son
544	Anna Schulz	16		daughter
545	Agneta Schulz	8		daughter
546	Jacob Schulz	44		farmer
547	Hrch. Kreker	48		farmer
548	Anna Kreker	38		wife
549	Peter Kreker	34		farmer
550	Catha. Kreker	28		wife
551	Hrch. Kreker	5		child
552	Catha. Kreker	4		child
553	Marie Kreker	10	mo. infant	
554	Johann Kluver	43		farmer
555	Marie Kluver	43		wife
556	Joh. Kluver	15		child
557	Hrch. Kluver	9		child
558	Marie Kluver	8		child
559	Elisb. Kluver	6		child
560	Anna Kluver	6		child
561	Aran Dueck	28		farmer
562	Anna Dueck	32		wife

563 Anna Dueck 7 mo. infant
564 Abraham Friesen 66 farmer
565 Marie Friesen 55 wife
566 Peter Eitsen 31 farmer
567 Hrch. Pankratz 54 farmer
568 Helene Pankratz 47 wife
569 Peter Pankratz 18 son
570 Jacob Pankratz 5 son
571 Johann Pankratz 11 mo. infant
572 Anna Pankratz 22 daughter
573 Marie Pankratz 29 daughter
574 Elisab. Pankratz 8 child
575 Hrch. Pankratz 25 farmer
576 Anna Pankratz 19 wife
577 Cornel. Pankratz 6 mo. infant
578 Franz Pankratz 38 farmer
579 Catha. Pankratz 36 wife
580 Frz. Pankratz 14 son

581 Jacob Adrian 9 child
582 Catha. Adrian 6 child
583 Anna Adrian 4 child
584 Joh. Janzen 32 farmer
585 Sara anzen 23 wife
586 Sara Janzen 11 mo. infant
587 Catha. Abraham 43 woman
588 Eva Abraham 17 child
589 Joh. Abraham 14 child
590 Hrch. Abraham 9 child
591 Helene Abraham 8 child
592 Marie Abraham 3 child
593 Catha. Abraham 8 mo. infant
594 Peter Wolf 26 farmer
595 Anna Woll 20 wife
596 Joh. Voth 51 farmer
597 Care. Voth 43 wife
598 Joh. Voth 21 child
599 Cornel. Voth 19 child (male)
600 Jacob Voth 9 child

601 Hrch. Voth 6 child
602 Susanne Voth 8 child
603 Elisb. Voth 4 child
604 Anna Voth 3 child
605 Joh. Voth 47 farmer
606 Alwine Voth 44 wife
607 Bernhard Voth 18 child
608 Joh. Voth 13 child
609 Peter Voth 9 child
610 Susanne Voth 22 child
611 Sara Voth 15 child
612 Anna Voth 14 child
613 Alwine Voth 9 child (female)
614 Jacob Krause 65 farmer
615 Peter Krause 17 son
616 Frz. Krause 14 son
617 Abraham Krause 8 son
618 Helene Krause 24 single
619 Cornel. Krause 29 farmer
620 Marie Krause 28 wife

621 Joh. Krause 4 mo. infant
622 Joh. Krause 22 farmer
623 Anna Krause 27 wife
624 Agneta Krause 2 mo. infant
625 Jacob Krause 39 farmer
626 Emma Krause 44 wife
627 Hrch. Krause 22 child
628 Jacob Krause 18 child
629 Sara Krause 9 child
630 Marie Krause 8 child
631 Emma Krause 6 child
632 Joh. Krause 4 child
633 Agneta Krause 6 mo. infant
634 David Goertz 36 farmer
635 Anna Goertz 50 wife
636 David Goertz 9 child
637 David Buller 60 farmer
638 Elisb. Buller 50 wife
639 Jacob Buller 25 child
640 Joh. Buller 21 child

641 Hrch. Buller 18 child
642 Abraham Buller 15 child
643 Elisabeth Buller 9 child
644 Gerhard Buller 8 child
645 Peter Buller 28 farmer
646 Helene Buller 27 wife
647 Elisb. Buller 4 child
648 David Buller 11 mo. infant
649 Jacob Voth 22 farmer
650 Helene Voth 23 wife
651 David Voth 11 mo. infant
652 Benjamin Nachtigall 48 farmer
653 Eva Nachtigall 59 wife
654 Peter Nachtigal 28 son
655 Helene Nachtigall 24 child
656 Sara Nachtigall 21 child
657 Eva Nachtigall 19 child
658 Andr. Nachtigall 22 child (male)
659 David Nachtigall 20 child
660 Tobias Nachtigall 17 child

661 Peter Shroder 34 farmer
662 Helene Shroder 30 wife
663 Peter Schroder 9 child
664 Catha. Schroder 4 child
665 Hrch. Schroder 10 mo. infant
666 Jacob Nachtigall 54 farmer
667 Catha. Nachtigall 53 wife
668 Jacob Nachtigall 27 child
669 Peter Nactigall 20 child
670 Benj. Nachtigall 15 child
671 Helene Nachtigall 24 child
672 Catha. Nachtigall 19 child
673 Anna Nachtigall 14 child
674 Peter Voth 59 farmer
675 Catha Voth 55 wife
676 Hrch. Voth 26 child
677 David Voth 25 child
678 Marie Voth 21 child
679 Sara Voth 19 child
680 Catha. Voth 15 child

681 Hrch. Geertz 39 farmer
682 Sara Geertz 37 wife
683 Hrch. Geertz 13 child
684 Peter Geertz 14 child
685 Emma Geertz 16 child
686 Peter Geertz 7 child
687 Sara Geertz 4 child
688 Elisb. Geertz 4 child
689 Franz Geertz 6 mo. infant
690 Eva Geertz 6 mo. infant
691 Jacob Pankratz 46 farmer
692 Anna Pankratz 46 wife
693 Joh. Pankratz 14 son
694 Hrch Franz 22 farmer
695 Elisb. Franz 17 wife
696 Peter Pankratz 42 farmer
697 Elisb. Pankratz 37 wife
698 Wilhe. Pankratz 19 child (female)
699 Eva Pankratz 15 child
700 Peter Pankratz 13 child

701 Hrch. Pankratz 9 child
702 Jacob Pankratz 7 child
703 John Pankratz 4 child
704 Frz. Pankratz 3 child
705 Cornelius Pankratz 5 mo. infant
706 Peter Wiebe 26 farmer
707 Sara Wiebe 26 wife
708 Hrch. Wiebe 3 child
709 Anna Wiebe 4 mo. infant
710 Anna Wiebe 54 woman
711 Elisb. Wiebe 22 child
712 Anna Wiebe 19 child
713 Franz Groming 39 farmer
714 Barba. Groming 29 wife
715 Franz Groming 14 son
716 Abraham Groming 7 son
717 Anna Groming 9 daughter
718 Hrch. Durksen 47 farmer
719 Elisb. Durksen 49 wife
720 Hrch. Durksen 15 child

721 Elisb. Durksen 13 child
722 Peter Durksen 18 child
723 Marie Durksen 4 child
724 Helene Durksen 11 mo. infant
725 Jacob Gaeddert 40 farmer
726 Sara Geddert 46 wife
727 Jacob Geddert 19 child
728 Peter Geddert 16 child

729 Diedr. Geddert 14 child (male)
730 Joh. Geddert 13 child
731 Franz Geddert 9 child
732 David Geddert 5 child
733 Elisb. Geddert 8 child
734 Sara Geddert 2 mo. infant
735 Daniel Martens 44 farmer
736 Agneta Martens 40 wife
737 Franz Martens 16 child
738 David Martens 14 child
739 Jacob Martens 6 child
740 Catha. Martens 9 child

741 Gerhard Pettker 30 farmer
742 Marie Pettker 25 wife
743 Gerhard Pettker 4 son
744 Jacob Ratzlaff 46 farmer
745 Helene Ratzlalff 42 wife
746 Jacob Ratzlaff 22 child
747 Helene Ratzlaff 20 child
748 Gerhard Ratzlaff 18 child
749 Hrch. Ratzlaff 13 child
750 Peter Ratzlaff 9 child
751 Sara Ratzlaff 6 child
752 Anna Ratzlaff 3 child
753 Isaac Ratzlaff 8 mo. infant
754 David Franz 61 Farmer
755 Helene Franz 57 wife
756 Peter Unruh 40 farmer
757 Marie Unruh 39 wife
758 Peter Unruh 14 child
759 Marie Unruh 13 child
760 Hrch. Unruh 5 child

761 Emma Unruh 4 mo. infant
762 Andr. Beeck 42 farmer
763 Elisb. Beeck 48 wife
764 Joh. Beeck 14 child
765 Gerhard Beeck 9 child
766 Agneta Beeck 24 child
767 Hrch. Toews 35 farmer
768 Emma Toews 21 wife
769 Abraham Toews 3 child
770 Helene Toews 9 child
771 Catha. Toews 8 child
772 Anna Toews 11 mo. infant
773 Jacob Pauls 44 farmer
774 Anna Pauls 29 daughter
775 Jacob Pauls 9 son
776 Hrch Pauls 5 son
777 Joh. Pauls 7 mo. infant
778 Eva Fauls 18 daughter
779 Helene Pauls 6 daughter

780 Jacob Friesen 20 farmer
781 Marie Friesen 20 wife
782 David Schroeder 35 farmer
783 Agneta Schroeder 32 wife
784 Helene Schroeder 5 child
785 Anna Schroeder 3 child
786 Agneta Schroeder 11 mo. infant
787 Elisabeth Schroeder 1 mo. infant
788 David Unruh 38 farmer
789 Sarah Unruh 36 wife
790 David Unruh 15 child
791 Sarah Unruh 13 child
792 Hrch. Unruh 9 child
793 Anna Unruh 7 child
794 Gerhard Unruh 8 mo. infant
795 Jacob Unruh 8 mo. infant
796 Hrch. Unruh 77 farmer
797 Anna Unruh 78 wife
798 Peter Abrahams 44 farmer
799 Helene Abrahams 49 wife
800 Peter Abrahams 25 child

801 Marie Abrahams 21 child
802 Bernha. Abrahams 23 child
803 Franz Abrahams 27 child
804 Anna Abrahams 17 child
805 Marie Abrahams 9 child
806 Catha. Abrahams 7 child
807 Gerha. Toews 36 farmer
808 Sara Toews 21 wife
809 Jacob Toews 14 child
810 Cornelius Toews 9 child
811 Agathe Toews 4 child

812 Jacob Friesen 47 farmer
813 Helene Friesen 49 wife
814 Jacob Friesen 21 child
815 Joh. Friesen 9 child
816 Joh. Warkentin 26 farmer
817 Marie Warkentin 26 wife
818 Joh. Warkentin 3 mo. infant
819 Jacob Warkentin 3 mo. infant
820 Joh. Warkentin 49 farmer

821 Helene Warkentin 49 wife
822 Elisb. Warkentin 17 daughter
823 Peter Warkentin 54 farmer
824 Helene Warkentin 40 wife
825 Peter Warkentin 20 child
826 Helene Warkentin 9 child
827 Jacob Block 35 farmer
828 Susanne Block 35 wife
829 Isaac Block 9 child
830 Johann Block 7 child
831 Jacob Block 5 child
832 Anna Block 8 child
833 Susanne Block 3 child
834 Abraham Block 3 mo. infant
835 Joh. Braun 39 farmer
836 Susanne Braun 40 wife
837 Joh. Braun 9 child
838 Anna Braun 6 child
839 Catha. Braun 4 child
840 Jacob Heidebrecht 32 farmer

841 Catha. Heidebrecht 27 wife
842 Jacob Fast 9 child
843 Jacob Fast 43 farmer
844 Elisb. Fast 42 wife
845 Jacob Fast 18 child
846 David Fast 16 child
847 Gerhard Fast 13 child
848 Peter Fast 8 child
849 Elisabeth Fast 20 child
850 Marie Fast 9 child
851 Catha. Fast 2 mo. infant
852 Martin Hamm 63 farmer
853 Helene Hamm 47 wife
854 Thos. Hamm 17 child (male)
855 Abrah. Hamm 15 child
856 Gerha. Hamm 13 child
857 Paul Hamm 9 child
858 Abraham Koop 28 farmer
859 Cacilie Koop 26 wife
860 Abraham Koop 4 child

861 Anna Koop 3 child
862 Absan Martens 43 farmer
863 Agneta Martens 44 wife
864 Eva Martens 20 child
865 Joh. Martens 18 child
866 Marie Martens 16 child
867 Agneta Martens 13 child
868 Elisbeth Martens 9 child
869 Franz Martens 3 child
870 Peter Pankratz 55 farmer
871 Sara Pankratz 61 wife
872 Hrch. Pankratz 24 son
873 Marie Pankratz 23 daughter
874 Cornel. Warkentin 58 farmer
875 Elisabeth Warkentin 52 wife
876 Agathe Warkentin 21 child
877 Sara Warkentin 18 child
878 Susanne Warkentin 16 child
879 Anna Warkentin 14 child
880 Cornel. Warkentin 14 child (male)

881 Abrah. Warkentin 7 child
882 Gerh. Wieder 49 farmer
883 Helene Wieder 35 wife
884 Helene Wieder 15 child
885 Joh. Wider 9 child
886 Anna Wieder 8 child
887 Sara Wieder 7 child
888 Peter Wieder 6 child
889 Elisabeth Wieder 4 child
890 Margar. Wieder 3 child
891 Hrch. Wieder 6 mo. infant
892 Cornel. Funck 28 farmer
893 Helene Funck 23 wife
894 Benj. Ratzlaff 45 farmer

895	Sara Ratzlaff	25	daughter
896	Benj. Ratzlaff	14	child
897	Joh. Ratzlaff	9	child
898	Peter Ratzlaff	5	child
899	Sara Ratzlaff	3	child
900	Hrch. Ratzlaff	6 mo.	infant
901	Benj. Ratzlaff	83	farmer
902	Joh. Harder	41	farmer
903	Anna Harder	37	wife
904	Marie Harder	16	daughter
905	Joh. Harder	15	son
906	Gerha. Harder	14	son
907	Catha. Harder	9	daughter
908	Anne Harder	8	daughter
909	Margr. Harder	6	daughter
910	Elisb. Harder	3	daughter
911	Hrch. Harder	5	son
912	Jacob Harder	5 mo.	infant
913	Diedrict Neufeld	34	farmer
914	Elisabeth Neufeld	32	wife
915	Dietrich Neufeld	9	child
916	Abraham Neufeld	8	child
917	Gerhard Neufeld	7	child
918	Johann Neufeld	5	child
919	Elisb. Neufeld	6 mo.	infant
920	Elisabeth Fast	28	woman
921	Elisb. Fast	8	child
922	Johann Fast	7	child
923	Agneta Fast	6	child
924	Cornelius Fast	5	child
925	Gerhard Fast	2 mo.	infant
926	Hrch. Penner	56	farmer
927	Anna Penner	45	wife
928	Peter Penner	25	child
929	Hrch. Penner	23	child
930	Johann Penner	20	child
031	Jacob Penner	18	child
932	Erdmann Penner	9	child (male)
933	Susanna Penner	20	child
934	Hrch. Penner	8 mo.	infant
935	Abraham Regier	31	farmer
936	Elisab. Regier	51	wife
937	Franz Regier	21	child
938	Marie Regier	19	child
939	Jacob Regier	17	child
940	Peter Regier	9	child
941	Anna Regier	13	child
942	Cornel. Regier	7	child (male)
943	Joh. Regier	23	child
944	Anna Regier	17	child
945	Joh. Regier	20	child
946	Herm. Harder	46	farmer
947	Justine Harder	49	wife
948	Joh. Harder	21	son
949	Catha. Harder	19	child
950	Anna Harder	17	child
951	Elisb. Harder	9	child
952	Herm. Harder	5	child
953	Marie Harder	4	child
954	Peter Harder	11 mo.	infant
955	Minna Harder	1 mo.	infant (f)
956	Robert Hess	50	merchant
957	Schmul Meyer	62	merchant
958	Dora Meyer	50	wife
959	Marie Meyer	18	daughter
960	Schmul Lesser	30	merchant
961	Elise Buller	43	woman
962	Elise Buller	19	child
963	Susanne Buller	9	child
964	Hrch. Buller	7	child
965	Peter Buller	2½	infant
966	Joh. Dirks	23	farmer
967	Marie Toews	1 mo.	infant
968	Peter Schmidt	16	
969	Anna Schmidt	18	
970	Gracy Tettlier	born at sea May, '74	
971	Johann Epp	41	farmer
972	Marie Epp	39	wife
973	Marie Epp	15	child
974	Catha. Epp	9	child
975	Hrch. Epp	53	farmer
976	Margr. Epp	35	wife
977	Hrch. Epp	16	child
978	Joh. Epp	6	child
979	Catha. Epp	13	child
980	Catha. Epp	5	child
981	Wall	37	farmer
982	Marie Wall	54	wife
983	Gerhard Wall	20	child
984	Jacob Wall	9	child
985	Cornelie Wall	17	child (female)
986	Margr. Wall	14	child
987	Peter Lender	65	farmer
988	Renata Lender	60	wife
989	Peter Balzer	45	farmer
990	Anna Balzer	42	wife
991	Peter Balzer	19	child
992	Anna Balzer	15	child
993	Hrch. Balzer	13	child
994	Jacob Balzer	9	child
995	Abraham Balzer	8	child
996	Gerhard Balzer	3	child
997	Auguste Balzer	15	child (female)
998	Hugo Damming	28	officer
999	Diedrich Geddert	37	farmer
1000	Marie Geddert	32	wife
1001	Jacob Geddert	14	child
1002	David Geddert	9	child
1003	Marie Geddert	8	child
1004	Elisb. Geddert	7	child
1005	Susanne Geddert	6	child
1006	Justine Gaeddert	5	child
1007	Joh. Geddert	11 mo.	infant
1008	Anna Geddert	1 mo.	infant
1009	Jacob Gaddert	73	farmer
1010	Michael O'Neil	39	manufacturer

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1. Kaufman, *Ibid.*, p. 80, footnote 13.

2. Unruh, Otto D., *Schisms of the Russian Mennonites of Harvey, McPherson, and Reno Counties, Kansas* (Unpublished manuscript for Master of Arts Degree; University of Kansas, 1928) p. 62.

3. Unruh, *Ibid.*, p. 64.

4. Unruh, *Ibid.*, p. 67.

5. Schmidt, John F., *Mennonite Life* (Vol. 28, No. 2) June, 1973, p. 37.

6. Schmidt, *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Chapter VI

THE BEGINNING OF THE HOFFNUNGSAU CONGREGATION

It may well have been easier for the new Alexanderwohl congregation to get started here in America than for the Hoffnungsau congregation. In Russia the two were one. The Alexanderwohl group had its ordained elder; the Hoffnungsau group had some ordained ministers, but no ordained elder. Elder Jacob Buller led the group that came over on the Cimbria; he continued in New Alexanderwohl as Elder of the Congregation. Rev. Dietrich Gaeddert was the leader of the Teutonia group, and was an ordained minister, but not an ordained elder. This was another of the decisions the Hoffnungsau group had to make; for Alexanderwhol this was already decided.

Although we know that the two groups came on different ships, and that in the Buller group there was interest in going to Nebraska, while in the Gaeddert group there was greater interest in Kansas only, yet we do not know exactly how the two groups were made up when they first formed the two groups. There is no hint anywhere that this was a division in any manner consciously based or even "one following Apollo, and the other Paul"; from appearance it was a making up of two groups probably by families and relatives, perhaps by readiness to go, or convenience of getting to a railroad depot, or even quite by chance into which ship they were entered. According to the records there were several from the Gaeddert group settling near the Hutchinson region that went to join the Buller group north of Newton in new Alexanderwohl.

Both Buller and Gaeddert, leaders of the two groups, were ordained ministers in the Alexanderwohl Church, Russia. Buller was the elder in Alexanderwohl, Russia, and continued as elder when the group settled in Kansas and formed new Alexanderwohl. Gaeddert was a minister in Russia and led his group enroute and into Kansas in that capacity. This group did not have an ordained elder, and it was not until after Hoffnungsau had been formed as a congregation in 1875, and operating for more than a year, that an election for the eldership at Hoffnungsau fell to Dietrich Gaeddert and he was ordained as the first elder of the Hoffnungsau congregation May 14, 1876, by Elder Jacob Buller of new Alexanderwohl.

That others saw in Dietrich Gaeddert leadership qualities is endorsed by Christian Krehbiel when he came to meet the group at St. Louis:

> Several of us went with the party to St. Louis to act as interpreters. The company was to change trains there, and, watching Gaeddert, I saw his capacity to command. In the midst of all the excitement and confusion and inconsiderate behavior of some members of the party, he saw everything, issued his orders in few and calm words, and left his post only when the entire company had entrained on the Missouri Pacific, one of our contract carriers. My brother-in-law, D. C. Ruth, accompanied the travelers to Kansas City where another change of trains was to be made. At some station on the way one of the passengers made a small purchase and left his purse with $400—probably everything he owned—on the counter; and in spite of Ruth's efforts, it was not recovered.[1]

In the first years following their arrival in 1874 the Hoffnungsau congregation worshiped in one of the immigrant houses. This was located about one mile north and one mile west of the present location of the Hoffnungsau Church building. (According to A. J. Dyck, in a paper among several which have been preserved.) In another paper designating the location of this same immigrant house, Rev. Dyck speaks of it as being "nordwest von der jetzigen Kirche etwa 3 Meilen entfernt." (Northwest from the present location of the church building about 3 miles.) According to remembrances of persons still living, the first mentioned mileage is likely

more nearly correct. This large building in which many lived for several months after their arrival until one by one the families built their own houses remained their congregational meeting place until they erected their first adobe brick structure mentioned earlier in 1880. They had already laid temporary plans for a church building by the time a violent storm destroyed the immigrant house in March of 1880. Following this destruction, there was no further delay in building the adobe brick building. This was located on the same grounds where the present building is located.

Within the group there was disagreement, too. In fact, Gaeddert says that this was not absent in Russia either. Already in Russia two groups had been formed which gained recognition by the Russian government, reserving for them the same rights as established Mennonite churches had. These were the *Bruedergemeinde* (Mennonite Brethren), and the *Kleine Gemeinde,* "both having become separate ecclesiastical bodies, and retained their rights as Mennonites."[2] One of these was the result of the working among them of a former Lutheran evangelist by the name of Wuest, who had gained many followers among the Mennonites in Russia, and finally they formed their own ecclesiastical body, the Mennonite Brethren Church.

But even among those who came to America, and who settled with the Gaeddert group and became the Hoffnungsau congregation, not all were of one accord. Gaeddert writes in his *Gemeinde Chronick* that the very first year when the group was still in the process of forming a congregation, a group led by Jacob Klassen left and organized what came to be the Bethel Mennonite Church near Inman, under Klassen's leadership. The details of what caused differences of opinion is not given. Both groups, however, are members of the Kansas Conference (now Western District Conference) and also of the General Conference Mennonites.

It is not known by the writer how many of Gaeddert's group were members of the Alexanderwohl Church in Russia. Not all of the villages in Russia had their own congregations says C. H. Smith, but usually the church was quite centrally located among its constituents.[3] Hence there may well have been some within the Gaeddert group from other congregations besides Alexanderwohl. It is clear that not all affiliated

themselves with the Hoffnungsau congregation immediately. According to C. C. Regier's translation of his grandmother's diary plus his own brief history of the developments in their family, there were those who did not feel at home "under the Gaeddert regime."

In time these families also gathered together into a meeting place of their own and began looking for a leader. According to the "Memoirs of Bernard Buhler," a minister already ordained in the Berdjansk Mennonite congregation in Russia in 1864, and asked him to become leader of this group. Bernard Buhler may have had reluctance at first but he says in his own "Memoirs":

> For two years the family and I had clung to the Hoffnungsau Church without having joined formally. I harbored the thought of doing so, since I found warm recognition in the circle of the congregation for my activity in proclaiming the Gospel. At that time Brother Gaeddert was the elder of that congregation and he was favorable to me. One instance shows that this was the case. In 1878 his wife died. He missed her greatly. Not that he doubted that she died saved; no, she died believing in Jesus. But he had lost the presence of wife and mother for a group of half-grown children. This made him very melancholy so that after half a year he looked around for another wife and mother and found what he was looking for (in Helena Richert whom he married March 27, 1879). Unexpectedly for me, he wished me to perform the wedding ceremony, which was rather unusual as in such cases usually only an elder could officiate. I insert this remark only to show that Brother Gaeddert had regard for me.[4]

Bernard Buhler tells a little more about the development of the Brethren movement in Russia and the warmth he felt toward it:

> Now another circumstance kept me from being able to join that church. The Brethren movement in Russia had become quite firmly established and at the time of emigration it had been transplanted to America, particularly in Kansas in this settlement. I, or rather we, had already in Russia come into contact with this Brethren movement. The grace of God had seen to it that a spiritual life had been brought about in our circles and thank God we could be reckoned among this group.
>
> And so it came about quite by itself that we should feel

attracted to many things in the Brethren by whom this spiritual life was nurtured, although I, personally, could not agree with their demand of the form of baptism. So it is no wonder that in our new home we felt drawn to them; that is, we could not be opposed to their striving. We followed our feelings and associated with them and were happy among them. Brother Gaeddert could not understand this and opposed it with attacks, which I did not consider right; at least, not the way and manner in which he did it. Oh, I felt it necessary to contradict him, but to no avail. At this time there were several families that were still without membership. They had joined with several others and began to work on me to become their leader. Several other families from Brother Gaeddert's congregation felt as I did about our conduct toward the members of the Brethren and joined our movement. So it came about that the Hebron Congregation was founded.[5]

This was the beginning of the Hebron Church, which began in 1879 and where Bernard Buhler was ordained as elder in the fall of that year. It needs to be noted that these two congregations have also worked side by side all through the years, both in district and General Conference work, in support of Bethel College, in support of MCC, as well as community activities. Perhaps this is only another illustration of what can happen when a parting of the ways results between groups that does not seem to be major in differences on essentials, and where there is engendered a continuing desire to permit room for growth and development on both sides; the Lord can use such groups, both of them, in His Kingdom.

Added to Gaeddert's "Kurze Chronick" is also a section on "Gemeinde Regeln" (Rules for the Congregation). This is not a translation of the "Regeln," rather a mention of some of the points of emphasis:

1. It is very clear that the congregation is founded on Jesus Christ, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," I Cor. 3:11. Those who are ready not only to profess this by word of mouth, but to live their life by this, to those shall membership be open.
2. It is to be a congregation where repentant sinners can find forgiveness through Christ, and fellowship with likeminded persons.
3. Church discipline shall follow the steps set forth in

Matthew 18. Other references include 1 Cor. 5:9ff; 2 Thess. 3:14, 15 (emphasis on 15).

4. Baptism shall be administered upon confession of faith by the candidate. It shall follow normally a period of instruction from 3 to 5 months; this for our children, but also for those wishing to join our congregation, but not of same background.
   Baptism shall be done by pouring; it shall be done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The form is not all important; of main importance is "der Bund eines guten Gewiszens" (the bond of a good conscience before God).
5. Communion shall be observed several times a year with those who come in repentance and faith, and who are baptized into the fellowship of believers.
   Along with communion foot-washing is to be observed, according to the example of our Lord—John 13.
6. The office of elder and minister is in many ways the same. However, the elder is to perform certain ordinances: he should baptize; officiate at communion, and perform ordinations. Scripture references: Lev. 8:2; Lev. 21:10; Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14! 5:1; 7:26; and 9:11.
7. Ministers shall be elected from within the congregation. The need for ministers shall be clearly laid before the congregation and after prayerful seeking of God's will and entreating that He lead His servants in the election of the right persons, a congregational meeting is to be called. Each member shall list the name or names of person he wishes to nominate. From among these there shall then be elected the needed number.
   The ones so chosen shall be ordained by the elder. It is expected that those so chosen shall serve for the days of their life, or as long as health permits.
   The elder shall in like manner also be elected by the vote of the congregation. It shall be one from those duly elected as ministers. Another elder from a sister congregation shall perform the ordination of the elder.
   Deacons likewise shall be elected, and ordained by the elder.

In the final paragraph it is said that those who are here organizing into the Hoffnungsau congregation come from

different congregations in Russia. They will become incorporated and if they permit God to lead them, and if they remain true to Him, then He can use them to His Honor and glory. This remains the wish of these who write the "Regeln" and those who agreed to the proposals.

Not all has been carried out literally as here set forth. Times and changes have altered quite a number of things. It is our continuing hope and our strong desire that we remain true to the Will of God as revealed in Christ our Lord. He too, found it necessary to make changes, especially where too much emphasis was laid on form and tradition and not enough attention given to a person's relationships to his brother and to his God. Our Lord did not want the church to become an institution; He wanted it to be a body of believers who worked, prayed, witnessed together to minister to God's people here on earth.

Rev. P. K. Regier, who was one of the ministers elected from this church and who became a leader in the larger conference work as well as pastor in several congregations, was led to observe at the fiftieth anniversary of the Buhler Mennonite Church the following:

> At the time of the organization of the congregation, the need for a Sunday school was not yet recognized. However, religious instruction was given on Sunday afternoons in local public school buildings. Bible and the German language were also taught in public schools on weekdays, usually in the morning until the first recess. Not too much later a well organized Sunday school developed and became a part of the regular Sunday morning worship services. I well remember a preschool age class held in the north balcony in the Low German language.
>
> Such a thing as a Church Council was unknown in those days and therefore matters, both small and large, were decided by frequent meetings of the so-called *Bruderschaft*. It is rather interesting that one of the decisions passed by this congregational meeting was to the effect that the kitchen floor should be scrubbed.
>
> As the name implies, these business meetings were truly a *Bruderschaft*. Not only did the women have no vote, they were not even allowed to attend. Women were never elected or appointed on committees and elected brethren took care, I suppose through their wives, of such matters as strictly pertained to women's concerns.
>
> Discipline was strictly practiced. When members com-

mitted actions unbecoming to Christian standards, a committee usually composed of minister and/or deacons was appointed and ordered to visit the offender to bring him in line again. The ban of excommunication was freely practiced. However, upon confession and repentance the Church forgave the offender and he was again received into the fellowship.

Ethical standards were very strict and they were a far cry from the liberal spirit of permissiveness of our day. A resolution is on record where the *Bruderschaft* passed a motion to the effect that the Church take a postive stand against young people joining such a worldly organization as a musical or brass band. Another resolution is to the effect that the Church give a warning to the young people against going and attending a box supper.

With the passing of years, the Church grew in membership and it became too large to be served by one minister. Evangelists were chosen out of its own membership. Also branch Churches were established. The Buhler Mennonite Church was organized in 1920 and the Inman Mennonite Church in 1921. For some time these Churches were under the wing of the Mother Church and ministers of the Church served in these locations. Eventually, however, both of these groups became independent organizations and are, at present, thriving, growing, strong Churches, each with its full far-reaching Church program.[6]

Dietrich Gaeddert was a teacher already in Russia, and here in the States he worked for the development through education. One of the first schools arranged for after they were here was in the "big room" in his own home. How many pupils there were, and for how long this lasted before the transfer to the public school system the writer was not able to learn. But before long these pioneer settlers were faced with the encroaching of public education making its demands. Education in America was left in the hands of the State, rather than being federally directed. There seems to have been no severe objection to the coming of public school education. At first only a few months were required. This was in English. Arrangements were usually made to have part of this time or else time preceding or following the State required time given to teaching German and Bible. Later the vacation Bible School concept developed. There seems not to have been too much difficulty in meeting the educational adjustment.

It was really in the Alexanderwohl region where the beginning of work beyond the public school requirements first

was provided for. It came about through the meeting of Mennonite teachers and ministers held in the Alexanderwohl community on November 15, 1877, just three years after the arrival of Mennonites in Kansas. At this early meeting a group of resolutions were passed, several of which pertained to school matters. One of these recommended the teaching of English to facilitate social intercourse with Americans. Another proposed the appointment of a committee of three to submit a program with which the proposed Kansas Conference could conduct school affairs. A third recognized the need of a "Central Schule" (Central School "Fortbildungs Schule"—really a school of higher learning to provide for teacher training and preparation for teaching). This only three years after they were here. Dietrich Gaeddert's name appears first in listing of ten committee members.[7] Out of this came the Halstead school which later moved to Newton and became what is now Bethel College. His interest in school promotion as also in Conference work he expressed in 1877 when he wrote:

> If the work of the Kingdom of God is furthered increasingly more through the Conference, shouldn't I be connected with it? . . . Should something go wrong in His Kingdom work, isn't it my duty to help correct it? . . . If a person is open-minded, not narrow, he will soon find his responsibility.[8]

In the Conference he helped to set up the Kansas Conference, working actively on several of its committees; he helped to change the Kansas Conference into the Western District Conference. He helped to frame its constitution, was on several committees at different times, presided at its first session as a Western District Conference in Newton, November 27-28, 1892. He participated in District and General Conference work actively. On the Bethel College Board he served for several terms 1894-97 and 1899-1900. Likewise he had served on the Halstead School Committee from its inception in 1877 until its closing in 1894. In the 1899 Western District Conference held in his own church, he together with C. H. Wedel and P. R. Voth was elected to the Bethel College Board, but this proved to be for a short time only since death came at the close of the next year.

For Dietrich Gaeddert there was much to do, at home in

his own congregation, in the community, and in the wider circles of District Conference and the General Conference.

Both the first and the second church buildings were erected during his eldership at Hoffnungsau. After the storm destroyed the Immigrant House in 1880, it did not take the congregation long to decide to build their own church building. It was an adobe brick structure, which was begun in August, 1880, and on December 19 of that year, Gaeddert writes that

First Hoffnungsau Church Building
an adobe brick building

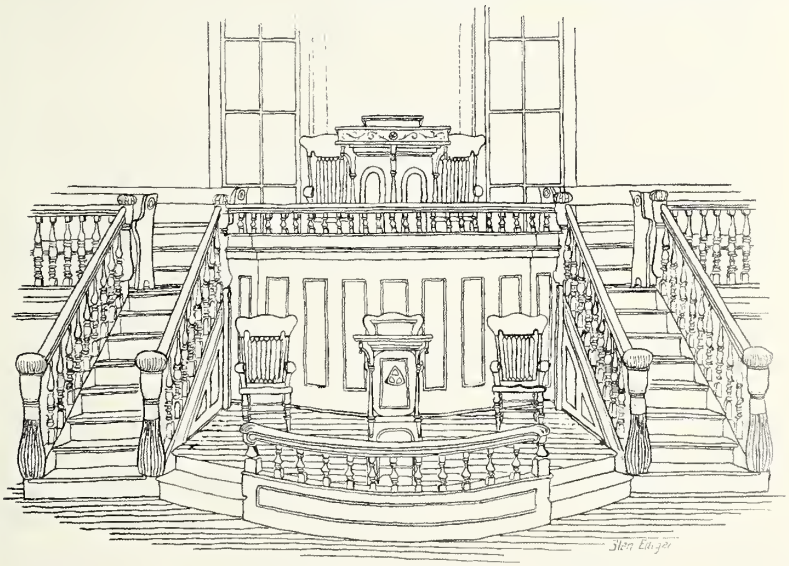
the first church building of our Mennonite congregation was dedicated. The wood for the interior, doors, etc., was bought for $300. Step by step they built this house. He describes how they knelt *for the first time* offering prayer to God at that place before work was begun. He also gives details of the dedication services, with Elder Jacob Buller, Alexanderwohl and Heinrich Richert both participating in the service.

The growth in membership soon outdated the first building, and in 1898 they built the second building, this one patterned more definitely after the Alexanderwohl Church building in Russia. It was 40 x 70 with an addition 20 x 40. It was a tall building, with an upper pulpit platform and a lower platform.

For special occasions when the balcony was filled as well as the lower hall, then the upper pulpit was used. The pulpit was against the west wall, in the center of the 70-foot span. The people in the congregation sat in front of the platform, but

Large frame church building built in 1898

Interior of frame building built in 1898 view of double tier of pulpits against west wall.



also on both sides, and the balcony was likewise on three sides. The Volume I Church Record book has two full pages devoted to the planning of the building and giving the cost of the building, which totaled somewhat over $7,000. This building was dedicated November 13, 1898, with an all day service—morning, afternoon, and evening. It was estimated that at the noon meal of zwieback, sugar cubes, cheese, and coffee, about 4,500 persons were served. Speakers for the occasion included C. H. Wedel, Bethel College; H. R. Voth, missionary; Professor Arnold from McPherson ("Tunker"—Dunkard) College; Christian Krehbiel, Valentine Krehbiel, and ministers from Alexanderwohl.

An interesting feature of Volume I Church Record is also the entries of the *Taufhandlungen* (baptismal occasions). These have their beginning on the last page in the book, and they move from back to the front. The first baptism was October 10, 1875. Elder Jacob Buller came for the baptismal service, since Hoffnungsau had not yet elected an elder. The following ten persons were baptized that morning in the Immigrant House:

Christoph Hinz—of Lutheran background
Abraham Goerzen—stepson of Henry Nikkel
Johann Fast—who lived with his brother-in-law Joh. Regehr
Peter Ratzlaff—son of minister Peter Ratzlaff
Johann Kliewer—son of Heinrich Kliewer
Peter Flaming—son of Andraes Flaming
Johanna Hinz—Freitag by birth
Hanne Krause—formerly Russian, wife of Cornelius Krause
Katharina Harder—daughter of Hermann Harder
Eva Ratzlaff—daughter of minister Peter Ratzlaff

And in like manner follow the other baptisms, listing first the men, then the women. Gaeddert's first baptismal ministry came in 1876, August 27. He had already been ordained as an Elder in the Hoffnungsau Gemeinde on May 14, 1876, by Elder Jacob Buller from Alexanderwohl.

Not only did Gaeddert baptize members in Hoffnungsau, he was frequently called to other churches for baptismal services. At least three times he was at the Hoffnungsfeld Church, Moundridge. He lists these in the Hoffnungsau book too, although they were not members here. Likewise he was called to the Canton Church, Moundridge, and to some of the Oklahoma churches.

Next to the love of family and church, Gaeddert's interest lay in conference and school promotion work. He attended almost every one of the various conferences: the Kansas, the Western District, and the General, and was almost invariably an active participant, serving on many different committees. He was interested in home and foreign missions and served on both committees. He served as itinerant preacher, visiting not only Kansas and Western Conference churches, but in Dakota and Minnesota. He served on the Halstead School Committee from its beginning in 1877 to 1894 when it closed. After that closed he served on the Bethel College Board of Directors for several terms, 1894-97 and 1899-1900. He was interested that teachers be adequately paid and wrote an article for *Zur Heimath*, saying that Peter Balzer who was teaching in a preparatory school should be paid an adequate salary so that he could spend his summers attending school for further preparation, rather than on the farm to earn a living.

He remained in the work of the church, schools, and conference until his health began to fail so he could no longer do his work.

From the church he was granted a furlough to follow the advice of his doctor to spend six months in California for an extended rest period. With help from some of the brethren he did this. In Volume I of the Church Records he speaks with deep appreciation for this time granted for an extended rest. In California he stayed in the home of Andrees Decker, where he had a room in which to read and meditate. He found Psalms 104 and 111 much to his encouragement, giving expression also to his own feelings about the wonders of creation as he experienced these in California.

He returned much rested and in time to help celebrate the silver anniversary of his congregation's emigration from Russia. He describes this in one of the last entries in the Church Record; also the Western District Conference held in Hoffnungsau in October. He participated here as usual, being elected together with C. H. Wedel and P. R. Voth to the Bethel College Board of Directors.

His health was failing, however. On December 2, 1900, Gaeddert had attended his church for the last time, admitting

new members. Even with deeper seriousnesss his demeanor was noted by many, wondering whether this might be his last service. It was. The following Sunday, confined to bed, he turned the responsibility of the congregation over to his co-workers, asking them to feed the flock.[9] On December 31, 1900 he passed away at the age of 63. The following May it would have been 25 years that he had served the Hoffnungsau Church as elder.

Short remarks at the funeral services were made by elders of neighboring churches: P. Balzer, Christian Krehbiel, David Goerz, P. Krehbiel, W. Ewert, William Galle, Jacob Claassen, Abraham Shellenberg, H. Toews, and Bernhard Buhler.

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1. Krahn, *op, cit.*, pp. 42-43.
2. Smith, C. H., *Coming of the Russian Mennonites* (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1927) p. 43.
3. Smith, *Ibid.*, p. 42.
4. Siemens, Anna Enns, *The Life and Descendants of Bernhard Buhler (1834-1918), Buhler, Kansas* (Unpublished manuscript, 1972), pp. 7-8.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
6. Regier, P. K., "Hoffnungsau—The Mother Church" *50th Anniversary of Buhler Mennonite Church 1920-1970*, pp. 7-8.
7. Wedel, Peter J. (Edited by Edmund G. Kaufman), *The Story of Bethel College* (North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College, 1954) p. 15.
8. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p. 82, footnote 22.
9. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p. 84, footnote 31.

Chapter VII

ABRAHAM RATZLAFF BECOMES ELDER

As the custom was the leadership was elected from the congregation's membership. Always they looked among the ministers who were serving for one to be elected as elder. This was never a hasty move, but prayerfully undertaken, and was done by giving members of the congregation opportunity to submit names as candidates by secret ballot. These names were then placed before the congregation where after prayer and entreaty to God for guidance and direction in this important step each was given again a secret ballot to cast. In this manner Abraham Ratzlaff was elected to the eldership of the Hoffnungsau congregation in 1902, eighteen months after the death of Elder Dietrich Gaeddert.

Abraham Ratzlaff
Elder 1902-1925

Ratzlaff had been active as minister in Hoffnungsau since elected in April, 1880 and ordained in May of that year. Now in September of 1902 he was ordained as elder.

Abraham Ratzlaff was born September 3, 1850, in the village of Franzthal, South Russia, the ninth of thirteen children born into the Peter and Maria Richert Ratzlaff family. He received his schooling in a South Russian village under Gerhard Dirks from 1857 until 1864. As was common with most village children, his schooling was finished at the age of fourteen. However, Abraham did additional learning through reading books and observing people. He also received catechetical instruction from Rev. Dirks, was baptized on Pentecost Sunday, 1869 by Elder Benjamin Ratzlaff of the Rudnerweide Church, and became a member of this church. On May 1, 1873 he was united in marriage to Helena Schmidt. About a year later they began to prepare for emigration to America leaving Russia on June 22, 1874 going by way of Hamburg where they left on the *Teutonia* which took them along with more than a thousand others to America. They were in the Gaeddert group, landing in New York, and from there inland to Topeka, and from there went to the Hoffnungsau settlement, where they bought land and built a home six miles east of what is now Buhler. They lived on this farm until they retired from the farm in 1919 and moved to Buhler.

Abraham became a member of the Hoffnungsau congregation when it was founded. He was a strong man both physically and spiritually. One of the members of the congregation expresses himself in this manner of his remembrance of Abraham Ratzlaff: "When I think of Rev. Ratzlaff I remember him as a very friendly and loving pastor. He loved especially children. He had a deep concern for each individual. If a church member had difficult problems the ministers would come together and prayerfully discuss the person's problems. During his eldership the German language was used; in the catechism class the answers to the questions of the booklet had to be memorized. The Sunday before baptism the 'Glaubens Articeln' (Articles of Faith) were read to the entire congregation with the candidates for baptism seated in front. For prayer the congregation would always stand; often they knelt for prayer, especially at communion service. I can well remember his appearance. He was always neatly

and well dressed, and was especially dignified in appearance when he wore his swallow-tail coat. He was a farmer and served the church without any pay, as was the custom at that time. He also served on the Bethel College Board for several terms and was very strongly in favor of young people attending Bethel Academy and College if they were interested in going on to school. During his days as minister and elder the ministers would go out by twos and make house visitations, calling on every family once a year."

One of Elder Ratzlaff's strong characteristics was his loving yet firm manner of working with people. He had ways of dissolving disagreements that could have grown from the proverbial "molehill to a mountain" and developed into something undesirable; but he was soon present with his understanding and positive presence, helping to guide things to good conclusions.

During these years members came from quite a distance to the Hoffnungsau Church. Families drove from south of Buhler and from beyond Inman to regular church services. There were also worship services held in different homes or in schoolhouses in and near Inman and Buhler. The need for separate meetinghouses made itself felt at both of these places —Buhler and Inman. So in 1909 a church building was erected in Inman and in 1913 one in Buhler. The congregation was growing quite large and with membership living so widely scattered it became difficult for one elder to serve the entire group. So in time each of these two places formed their own congregation, Buhler organizing in 1920 and Inman in 1921. Before they were separately organized the ministers from Hoffnungsau served in these places, but after they were separately organized they became independent congregations, each calling her own pastor. The separation which formed three groups out of one was done in a peaceful and friendly manner, and a friendly relation between the three churches exists to this day. The nucleus of both churches came from Hoffnungsau. According to a membership chart compiled by one of the members in 1964, the Hoffnungsau membership stood at 450 in 1920 and then dropped to 245 by 1923, but this was not considered so much a loss to the Mother Church as a way of helping two new churches to begin an outreach program in their respective communities.

Numerous events occurred during the 23 years that Abraham Ratzlaff was elder, but there was perhaps none that shook the community to the core quite like the coming of World War I in 1917.

At various times Mennonites had tried here in America to get exemption from military service but this was never obtained in writing. Promises were given that this should in no way deter them from settling here; that the raising of a militia would be up to each state and this was acceptable, at least as long as there did not seem to be any war clouds threatening on the horizon. For more than 40 years there had been no wars and no threat that made our people ill at ease. Then suddenly—here it was! War was declared by the United States and in the summer of 1917 drafting of men into the armed forces had begun. Now what could be done? C. Henry Smith in his book (*The Story Of The Mennonites,* p. 793) says that World War I tried the faith of the Mennonites in the United States as no other American war had. The Mennonite churches in America were not organized. There were various branches of Mennonites, each having its own conferences: district, and usually also a central conference, but there was no inter-conference organization. Leaders began to emerge who found common interests and found their way to Washington, D.C., to plead the cause of conscientious objection to participation in the required military service.

Meanwhile men were being drafted. From the Hoffnungsau Church, too, a number of men were drafted. There was no arrangement for alternative service; there was provision for noncombatant service for those who refused to take part in the regular service, but even this was never clearly defined, and it was for many too closely tied in with the war machine. Many felt this was more than they could do in good conscience.

(C. Henry Smith in *The Story Of The Mennonites,* pages 792-804 states what various conference papers made more or less their official position and gives numbers taking the various positions.)

Many of us recall how difficult a period of time this was; how the farewell occasions before the men left for camp were as sad as funeral occasions, for there hovered over the entire community the threatening uncertainty of what would happen

to these persons who refused to comply with military orders in a military camp.

For the congregation this must have caused very heart-rending moments. In the memory of many will remain some of the occasions in the church. One of these is a prayer of Elder Ratzlaff; the words are not remembered but the fervency of the intercessory prayer in behalf of the men in the camps and the families from which they came are not forgotten. If memory serves correctly it was a prayer at a Christmas Eve program where the atmosphere was charged with feeling and emotion as the Elder poured out his petitions unto God for the men in the camps and for their families.

In Hoffnungsau there has always been an interest in music. A statement summarizing this appears in "A Short Sketch Relative to the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church" by Rev. A. J. Dyck:

> From the beginning the church was interested in music, although progress was slow and some were of the opinion that a musical instrument should not be used in the church, yet the church has moved forward along this line. In the beginning a large number served as the so-called "Vorsanger." These would sit before the congregation, read one or two lines of the song and then all would sing the part read, after which the Vorsanger would read again, and so on until the often lengthy songs were sung through from beginning to end in a very slow way. Now, however, for a large number of years we have the musical instruments: Organ and Piano, and our singing is lively singing. The "Vorsanger" are no longer there, but we have song leaders for the whole congregation who direct the general singing. We also have a Junior Choir, a Senior Choir, a Men's Chorus, and some individual groups. . . .

This interest in good music has never died out in the congregation. The earliest hymnbooks used were the *Gesangbuch Ohne Noten*; then the *Gesangbuch Mit Noten* with the many rich chorales. This served until *The Mennonite Hymnary*, copyrighted 1940, and published by the Board of Publication of the General Conference Mennonite Church of North America, became common in our congregations. This hymnary was replaced in 1969 by *The Mennonite Hymnal* which continues to the present to be used. Other hymnbooks have also been used but never as extensively as the ones mentioned.

Another of the developments during this time was the

opening of the Hoffnungsau Preparatory School. This was opened in 1907. When it became evident that religious instruction that could be given in the public schools was increasingly inadequate, the congregation began considering

Hoffnungsau Preparatory School which opened 1907

seriously what could be done. In Russia the Mennonites had enjoyed control over the educational system within their villages with a minimum of direction from the government. In America the public school system was controlled by the state and was supported by public taxation. The state also prescribed the curriculum, although there could be time given for opening devotions; but time for Bible instruction adequate to prepare children for knowledge of the Bible became less and less.

Plans in various directions were considered. Finally the conclusion was reached that a Bible School should be set up for young people who had completed grade nine, the requirement for graduation from elementary school. High schools had not become common by that time, so it was planned that courses preparatory toward entering an academy and college

should be taught in this Preparatory School; however the main emphasis was instruction in Bible and in Church History. Hoffnungsau Preparatory School was opened in 1907 with J. H. Epp as its first teacher. While this school was to serve the Hoffnungsau congregation in preparing her own young people for service in the church and community, it was to be open for any persons from other churches. J. H. Epp taught at Hoffnungsau for six years when he was called to teach in the Hillsboro School. Following J. H. Epp came Abraham Albrecht who also taught for six years, and then became pastor of the Inman Church. Following him came E. E. Flickner for two years, and after him Rev. A. J. Dyck taught for three years, Henry Hege for one year, and P. T. Neufeld for three years. For a period of 21 years this Preparatory School graduated each year a goodly number of young people from its two-year course. Then the high schools became more and more common and replaced the preparatory school. In many cases it is found possible to teach Bible also in high schools on strictly nonsectarian basis, but the question remains with us how to adequately teach Bible to our children and young people.

Another development during the 23 years of Ratzlaff's eldership was the coming of the Sunday School into our churches and into Hoffnungsau. Again this was not a part of the church in the early years in America, neither had it been in Russia. Public school education directed by the state and funded by taxation made the teaching of religion less acceptable. One reason was that pupils from differing religious backgrounds attended the same public school and sectarian interests could not be promoted in public schools. This meant that the responsibility of Bible instruction and Church history had to be taken over by the church. Already in the early part of the twentieth century there were not a few who were greatly concerned that there should be more Bible taught to the children. Frequently groups were gathered in homes to give this instruction. These groups grew too large often for meeting in the homes and school buildings were used. Soon the time came when these classes met Sunday afternoons in the church house. By the time the large church building built in 1898 had been completed, arrangements were soon made to have Sunday School, and before long it became a part of

the Sunday morning service, arranged either before or after the worship service. The building was not constructed with room arrangements for the several classes; yet it wasn't long until various classes met in the different parts of the large building, and soon there came the arrangement for classes according to age. (The Low German dialect was still the common dialect used in the homes, so there was also a class of preschoolers who were taught in Low German; many of us recall this class in the northeast corner of the balcony.) The choir room on the east side in the balcony became rather early the room for catechetical instruction, especially when this was held during Sunday School time. When in 1935 some changes in the large, white frame structure were made and a basement was added, provisions were made for Sunday School rooms so that the needs were quite well met for a well-graded Sunday School curriculum to be taught.

In the course of time the need was felt for some evening sessions in the congregation where the Christian spirit could be nurtured. By this time the Mennonites came into more frequent contacts with other denominational groups, and it became relatively easy for us to make use of what others were doing. From the beginning we had always been apprehensive of what was being done in non-Mennonite circles. Neither were we the first to initiate new movements. However this apprehension became less as we mingled more with non-Mennonites and observed their practices. Thus came the Christian Endeavor (C.E.), although the German name for it was more expressive, *Christlicher Jugendverein*, (Christian organization for young people). Some of the older members were a bit fearful at first of permitting a youth organization of this type within the church, fearing that the youth might wrest the leadership from the congregation; but it was permitted on an experimental basis, and as members attended the programs and began to participate, they became its ardent supporters. A separate Junior C.E. was later begun, and by the late 1930's the two together had a membership of 200.

Another development that had been in progress for some time was increasing participation in the work of the church by the women. While the women had membership within the congregation, yet the *words* of Paul must have guided us more than Paul's own practice of the use of women in the work of

the church. The original *Bruderschaften* (meetings of the Brethren) were apparently literally men's meetings. Exactly when the change came permitting women to attend and at what point they were given a vote does not seem to be a record that anyone noted. Suffice it to say that by this time during Elder Ratzlaff's ministry the women began to organize into workers within the church. On record is the "Organization, Growth and Aims of the Sewing Society" written by Mrs. A. B. Reimer, 1950, which begins "Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her" (Mark 14:9). She gives recognition to Mrs. John K. Regier of Buhler and Mrs. John Unruh of McPherson who started our society in the year 1908. "Mrs. Regier had purchased new material for the newly instituted society and so we began our work by sewing pillowcases for Bethesda Hospital." She goes on to say that at the first meeting there were three present, Mrs. Reimer being one of them. By inviting others, friends and neighbors, and asking whether they could have meetings in their homes, their number grew. Some thought that societies like this would spell the ruin of the church; others branded theirs a "gossip society." But they went forward for they felt they were doing the Lord's work. Soon the Home Mission Committees were asking them to help with food, clothing, helping the hospitals. The Foreign Mission Board was asking for support for Bible women in the mission fields, adopting orphans and giving general encouragement to workers on the fields. It was not long until our society learned that on the mission fields, too, they were organizing their own sewing societies, trying to sew their own wearing apparel, and groups from the home churches could help in supplying money to buy materials on the fields.

From the Women's Sewing Society it grew to be the Women's Mission Society. Soon a group of younger women also organized under the name "Happy Hour Circle." With the many items the societies sewed and quilted they began to designate a day when they sold their finished articles. From that time their societies were seldom short of funds, for the sales usually produced well and the money was used for missions and to purchase the materials they needed to buy to make their quilts, comforters, and the many other useful gar-

ments prepared for the sale the following year. "They also support one orphan and a Biblewoman and have supplied various church needs such as a church organ, some pulpit chairs, some kitchen plates, an oil stove, a day bed, a water fountain, some tea towels and dishpans; helped redecorate the pulpit, the preacher's room and the nursery," she reports among other things these groups contributed.

Elder Ratzlaff's activities were not confined to Hoffnungsau nor to the community—although he was highly respected in the community of which he was a part, for there were many who had found in him a real friend in need,—his influence extended to the district conference and the General Conference, the hospitals: both Bethel Deaconess Hospital, Newton, which he helped to found, and Bethesda Hospital, Goessel, where he served as director and trustee for a number of years. For 18 years he served as chairman of the Bethel College Board of Directors, making many valuable contributions.

Deloris A. Schmidt in a research paper presented to the Department of Bible, Bethel College, 1964, quotes a tribute which appeared in *Pioneers in Profile*, Vol. II (1945), a tribute to Elder Abraham Ratzlaff:

> Today a great and reverend soul is being buried. One would like to say to the pallbearers: "Walk carefully because you are carrying the temple of the anointed by God." The temple which had lived in his soul is today giving its life to the earth, but Uncle Ratzlaff lives. Although he has died, his works follow him, such works as: preacher in the church, as the "salt" and "light" in his community, as member and director of Bethel College Board, as comforter of sad and weary, as member of Bethel Hospital Board, and as a tolerant sympathetic "father" of youth.

That the Spirit of God was working in the lives of individuals is attested in many ways. Many people came to be baptized. In the obituary written for his funeral, it is stated that he baptized 389 souls, always with the prayer that these remain true to their promises and to their convictions.

There were those who felt that God was calling them to a specific work. Thus Rev. and Mrs. J. B. Ediger felt the call to mission work among our American Indians in the Clinton, Oklahoma, area. Mrs. Ediger, aged almost ninety-three, and still able to recall much of their work, was interviewed after

having been given some questions. She wrote out her own answers to these questions. Some of these answers are especially revealing, coming as they do after years of reflection. She says:

> I cannot remember the years I started attending the church. My parents took me with them when I was a baby. I was baptized in 1900 by Elder Dietrich Gaeddert and thus became a member of the Hoffnungsau Church. This event took place after a year of catechism instruction by the Elder. This made a great and lasting impression upon me as I can still recall some of the truths I learned there. Instead of giving our testimonies in front of the congregation we went to Elder Gaeddert's home and gave them to him alone.

She says again:

> I cannot remember that there was Sunday School in the old adobe church; this was organized later in the second building. Worship services in the adobe church consisted of congregational singing without an instrument and sung from the *Gesangbuch* without Notes, led by a *Vorsinger*, who sang very loud, and then two sermons. The ministers took turns in preaching. The entire service was in German for many years. Services were scheduled for ten o'clock. As a rule we were on our way home by 12 noon. The membership was about 300 to 400.

She speaks further of beginning the Inman and the Buhler churches and of having Sunday morning services in homes of the communities since the distance was too far in horse and buggy days. She also says that there was not a group that constituted the decision-making body for the congregation except at brotherhood meetings things were discussed. "The elder was given the authority to make all decisions," she says.

The women were not allowed to cast votes; they were not even supposed to attend the meetings. She speaks of education being stressed and a few had opportunity to attend Bethel Academy at Newton. She herself attended for two years and her husband went four years and graduated. "It was there that I took organ lessons and later made use of this by being the first organist in the Hoffnungsau Church. The organ in the church was a house organ."

Mrs. Ediger feels that the mission emphasis in the church was good. There were mission festivals, holiday observances in which missions was the theme. When the Mission Board

was in search for a couple to enter the Oklahoma field it was Rev. Balzer who suggested the Edigers. They responded and were ordained by the Rev. Balzer December 13, 1907. He used the text: "My son, give me thy heart; and let thine eyes delight in my ways" Proverbs 23:26. In May of the following year they entered the mission work in Clinton, Oklahoma. We use her own words in a further enlargement upon the work:

> The greatest barrier was the lack of confidence the Indians had in any white people. So we ministered to their physical needs as well as evangelizing. We gave them medicine and words of friendly encouragement, thus gaining their confidence. Then they were receptive to the Word of God. It was truly a harvest of souls, and we share the joy with the Hoffnungsau Church. It was due to the prayers of home folks and others that sustained us all our forty years in the same mission field.
>
> The Indians' religion included a Great Spirit and a high moral standard. Only a very few Indians prayed to idols. It was our privilege to bring them a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and the many other aspects of our Gospel.
>
> Depression years were difficult ones. We received only half of our salary. It was just when we needed the money the most because our eight children needed education money from lower grades to college. But by the grace of God, we all managed by pulling together as a family.

She ends the story with this testimony:

> My life has never been empty or without meaning. There have been hardships to face but there was always an abundance of strength from our heavenly Father to sustain us. My husband's faith as well as mine has always been strong and abiding. Here again I feel a wave of gratitude to our home church who upheld us in their prayers. And above all, I thank God for His patience with us and for His wonderful leading.

Among the numerous activities of this period must be mentioned also the ministers that have been elected out of the congregation and the opportunity of service that has come to them. In 1914 two were elected: A. J. Dyck and P. K. Regier. Of these two Rev. A. J. Dyck was later elected as elder of the Hoffnungsau Church to succeed Rev. Ratzlaff, and Rev. P. K. Regier who served as pastor in several churches in the General Conference, was also Executive Secretary for the General Conference Mennonite Church for nine years.

In 1922 Rev. C. H. Voth was elected and ordained as minister and served as associate minister until he resigned in 1961.

Mention must be made also of the development of Bethel Deaconess Hospital, which was dedicated in 1908. With the development of the hospital came also the development of the cause of the deaconess. Hoffnungsau contributed to the beginning of both. As has been mentioned, Rev. Ratzlaff served on the hospital's board, and to the deaconess cause our church made a significant contribution when Sister Catherine Voth dedicated her life to the cause of becoming a deaconess. There had been two sisters who became deasonesses earlier. Sister Frieda Kaufman had in 1900 responded to the plea made by Elder David Goerz for the need felt here in America to develop the deaconess work, much as it had been working in Europe. Sister Frieda became a candidate for the deasoness cause and entered Bethel College for preparatory study in 1900; later she took further work at the Deaconess Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she entered as their first candidate. The following year Martha Richert enrolled there as well and upon completing the two-year course of nursing was ordained by Elder Peter Balzer as a parish deaconess in the Alexanderwohl Church. She served that community as well as Bethesda Hospital until 1907 when she was married and with her husband, Elder P. A. Penner, went as a missionary to India. In 1905 Catherine Voth, daughter of Cornelius and Cornelia Heidebrecht Voth, was accepted as a candidate and also entered the Deaconess Hospital for a course in nursing. In the same year Ida Epp entered the Evangelical Deaconess Home and Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, and in 1908 Sister Frieda Kaufman, Sister Catherine Voth, and Sister Ida Epp were ordained when the Bethel Deaconess Hospital was dedicated June 11, 1908. They were the first three deaconesses of this motherhouse.[1]

School, missions, hospital work, conference, the church, and the home were the concerns of Elder Abraham Ratzlaff. He served in both the Western District and the General Conference in numerous committees and boards, as well as on the boards of the hospitals, and the Board of Directors of Bethel College. He was seldom absent from conference or church, education or service meetings, a man of God, deeply involved in the work of the Kingdom.

1 *The Mennonite Encyclopedia,* Vol. II, D-H, pp. 22-24.

Chapter VIII

DURING A. J. DYCK'S ELDERSHIP

Rev. A. J. Dyck, though short of stature, stood tall as a man of God. His work in the church and community stands as a monument to the strength of his character of which his good sense of humor was a unique part that endeared him to young and old alike.

A. J. Dyck
Elder 1925-1946

He was born October 14, 1888 to John C. and Katharina (Ratzlaff) Dyck, fourteen years after the settlement on the Kansas prairies. He grew up on the farm in the pioneer years, became a farmer and a teacher, interested and active in work of the church from early youth to the day of his death.

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ministry in the church, August 13, 1939, he wrote (which he

verbally related at the occasion) how one morning when his father drove him to the school where he was teaching asked whether he might be open to a call to work in the foreign mission fields. To this after some delay, Abraham gave answer, "I think for me there will be sufficient work here in the homeland." A. J. (as we often called him) continues—"and no sooner had I spoken the words, when a voice seemed to say to me, 'At home shall you work!' "

Shortly after that—some two years later—came the call from the congregation when on May 4, 1914 two persons were elected from the congregation to serve as ministers: P. K. Regier and A. J. Dyck. A. J. took this as the definite call of God to this work in the home congregation. In August of the same year he preached his first message in the Buhler Church "with fear and trembling" in his words, using the text Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved." This, he says, has been the keynote of all his preaching and of all his work. He continued as a minister in the congregation until in August, 1925 the church called him to serve as elder. He felt again that this was the call of God and accepted the responsible position as such, being ordained December 26, 1925 by Elder Abraham Ratzlaff, with whom he had worked as fellow minister since 1914. Rev. Ratzlaff's health was failing, especially was his hearing impaired, so that he no longer wished to assume leadership responsibilities, even though he continued to help out as long as he could.

Of his own activities A. J. at one occasion gave this summary:

> The old ministers have gone—Peter Heidebrecht, Peter Goertz, Abraham Ratzlaff, Peter Flaming, D. D. Unruh. . . .

with whom he had been privileged to work; and he continues

> Later Rev. C. H. Voth came, and he still serves; and Rev. Abr. Albrecht served six years, and I have enjoyed their services and enjoyed working with them.

Then he gives the word "Deacons" but does not list them. (He likely gave them orally without needing to include them in his notes.) He continues:

Some activities in the church—at first three churches. We alternated. In 1920 Buhler Church. In 1921 Inman Church. *Language question* (underlined!).

Services as pastor:

Baptisms 218 at home; 15 in other churches
74 have joined by letter
143 have joined other churches or left
74 have passed to their eternal reward
21 children died
2 deacons ordained
3 ministers ordained
3 elders ordained
2 churches dedicated
3 years secretary of W. D. Conference
2 times assistant secretary of General Conference
6 years vice-president of General Conference
12 years on Home Mission Board
9 years Board of Bethel College
6 years Board of Bethel Hospital
3 years Board of Bethesda Hospital
At present (December 29, 1946) President of Board of Bethel College
Secretary of Mennonite Historical Society
President of Business Committee of W.D. Conference
Catechetical instruction
Bible Study hours
Child consecrations
Solemnized marriages
Buried your dead
Enjoyed family gathering and birthdays
Visited your sick and dying
Been called at midnight hours, in early morning hours
In midst of harvest (underlined)
In snowstorms and snowdrifts
Funerals and weddings in other churches
More than one thousand sermons preached
Work for preparing for all this thousands and thousands miles driving in connection

He ends his "Remarks at the Meeting in Recognition of my Services in our Church December 29, 1946" with the words "God bless you for your love, prayers, patience, etc. May our church grow into Christ more and more is my prayer."

A summary of this nature is more than accounting for a leader's service—it is an account of the work of the church. It is remarkable how persons and groups who place themselves under the guidance of God are also prepared to meet the

situations and the crises that come to God's people.

The language question is one of the issues underlined in the activities listed. This refers to the transition from German to English in the use of the worship services and other phases of congregational work. Because the coming of World War I suddenly placed the German language in ill repute in our country, the change had to come somewhat abruptly. This was not such a shock to the people who had been born here, and had occasion to learn the English language in school and in the flow of commerce in the marketplaces. It was also less difficult for the men who got into contact with the English-speaking world much more so than did the mothers and grandmothers of the homes. (The writer recalls his own mother who would have found it most difficult to speak even a sentence in English by the time of World War I. While the father who had done the business for the family found it not too difficult to do what needed to be done and said in English.)

The change began during and right after the War and was done in an orderly manner. Had our church been located in a city we likely would have been under more direct pressure for a quicker changeover. It was fortunate that this did not have to happen so suddenly, for there were many who neither spoke nor understood the language at this time. To begin with there was only one English sermon a month; certain Sunday School classes, especially for the school-age children and youth, were conducted in the English, while for the older people the classes remained German, or at best—each expressing himself in the language he preferred.

With the grade school children and younger, there was often a period in the morning worship service where they came to the front of the church and the minister would tell them a Bible story, sing with them, or teach them a new song. Early in the language transition period Rev. Dyck had the children come forward and he taught them an English song, for which he was criticized. The words of the song are not clearly recalled by the member who related the incident, but they spoke something about "His sceptorly hand" which to the relater who was a child at the time, thought it spoke about a separator; for with cream separators all were familiar at the time. There was wisdom applied in many different ways of making this transition from German to English in as ac-

ceptable a manner as possible, so that the group could move together and suffer a minimum of loss.

Interest in education has been characteristic of the congregation since its beginning. Basically this always involved the children and youth in the concerns of the leaders and the membership; there was concern that children be taught the Bible and that everyone know the heritage that is ours in order that it be understood and appreciated. It was not a simple matter to keep these interests before our people. One thing was clear—more and more this had to become the concern of the church, for in the public schools this could not be expected to receive emphasis. It still seemed to many people that very much depended upon the teacher. So the importance of the teacher continued to receive a strong supportive role from the church, even the teacher in the public school system, for we were well aware that pupils learn more by what they see demonstrated than by what is told them. No doubt the common acceptance of this belief led many a person to become a teacher.

This interest in education became part of our Sunday School emphasis as well. The need for classroom space was felt already in the early 1930's. The congregation considered how to meet this need and soon agreed to put a basement under the large frame building that had been erected in 1898. Of this project Rev. Dyck was made chairman and Rev. C. H. Voth assistant. The trustees at this time were named the building committee. They were A. R. Nikkel, H. J. Ediger, Jacob E. Ediger, Henry Martens, and Jacob C. Wiens. Subscriptions were taken among the membership and the money became readily available to do the needed remodeling and completing of the basement, with its many classrooms. Labor was donated. Every male member was asked to do six days of labor free. This was gladly done and with the modern machinery at the time the work was soon completed. Mr. William Wiens, Newton, was engaged as builder and supervisor, and soon the work was completed, giving the congregation considerable space for its Sunday School program, which at this time was being graded by the standards set up by the Education Committee of the General Conference together with the comparable committee in the District Conference.

This space was also very adaptable for midweek services

and for wedding receptions, for this was the place where these could be well carried out. Likewise, for fellowship meals following funerals. This has been a part of the practice for many years, and again the new space in the church basement served well.

For the Sewing Circles this new space was again a very helpful thing. These Women's Circles which were Women's Mission Circles, and Relief Aid Circles, helping in so many ways the various conference mission activities, and MCC causes, were growing in size as well as in activity during this time. The basement area provided a very good place for them to do their work. It was also during this time that the Mission Sales began, where what was sewed and made by the Mission Societies was sold and the proceeds went to mission work. Later there were suppers served with the proceeds likewise going for missions.

It was during these years, too, in the early 1920's that the Hoffunugsau congregation spread out toward Inman and Buhler. Both of these towns were small at the time, but in them and in the communities nearby lived members of the mother church interested in building churches within their town. They saw this as an outreach for the church into new communities. Thus, the Mother Church helped to provide church buildings both in Buhler and in Inman, and helped both of these churches to become independent and self-sustaining, each calling their own pastors, and providing leadership for its various functions from within its ranks. Both churches have had a good beginning, have completed more than 50 years of work and progress as a congregation, and the three congregations are continuing to work together in the community and in the District and General Conference as sister churches eager to do the work of the Kingdom under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

What is remembered by a child at the time, and which left an indelible impression, is a reference to the importance of elections of ministers out of the congregation. It was when C. H. Voth was elected to the ministry in 1923. One of the members, just a child at the time, recalls the emotionally charged atmosphere at the time. It was a joyous occasion for the congregation, yet when after the election the ministers, including the newly elected minister Rev. Voth, retired to the

"Ohms Staufsche" (pastor's study) Rev. Voth was crying. To the child who later records this in adulthood, this left a deep impression; and it registers, no doubt, something of the seriousness with which the congregation undertook this important step of electing a minister.

It was during the time that Rev. A. J. was elder that World War II broke out, and our country became deeply involved. Military conscription again was used in our country to conscript its manpower. This time there had been some prior consultation of church leaders with government authorities, and an alternative system had been worked out whereby conscientious objectors could do alternative service approved by the government. The so-called peace churches: The Church of the Brethren (Dunkards), the Mennonites, and the Quakers (American Friends) had taken the lead in making this arrangement, though many other denominations later took part in working out the program where the conscientious objectors to military service were placed in camps and later in various other types of approved service in the interests of the country.

This again was a very demanding period of time for a congregation. Rev. A. J. spent much time helping the men who were drafted, and helping the congregation to understand that we were again faced with the decision relative to our Anabaptist heritage, namely the conflict the individual finds himself in when the country calls for duty on the one hand, and conscience and the Christian faith dictate that this is contrary to the life and the teachings of Christ whom we profess to follow. There were indeed anxious and searching times for the families, especially who had men drafted, and for the congregation as a whole.

One of the new practices that was introduced during the time Rev. A. J. was elder was Child Consecration Service. This was made a part of the morning worship service. Shortly after a child had been born into the family the mother and father would present the baby unto the Lord to be consecrated for His service. In the Scriptures there is ample evidence of such practices having taken place both in Old and New Testament times. This was found to be a very acceptable practice in the congregation, and although Rev. A. J. does not give the number of babies and parents thus dedicated unto the Lord's work, he does list it among the many activities that he found joy in doing in the Lord's service.

Rev. A. J. was employed as a farmer during most of his days, even though he was pastor of a large congregation, and for a time was also a teacher in the public school and in the parochial school. It was while engaged in farming and during harvesting activities that he met up with an accident with a tractor that reared backwards and fell on him, pinning him partially under it. By the grace of God his life was spared; however, he was hospitalized for what seemed to the family a long time. It was during a time such as this that the closeness of the congregation and her pastor expressed itself in many ways. Much prayer was offered in his behalf and he was again restored.

Many of us remember the thirties with its duststorms, drouths, and financial depression. Exactly how such a period affects a congregation or a community is hard to generalize. Money was scarce and work could not be gotten for gainful employment. Prices were extremely low for farm produce and livestock could hardly be given away. It is a tribute to the congregation and its leadership that this period, though difficult, did not disrupt the community too severely. Perhaps the saving feature was that we were all in it together and no one had much of an advantage over the other. It is a tribute to the leadership that kept the congregation intact and kept our courage undaunted, so that we could finally emerge from the hard times into a period where we could move ahead with greater confidence and hope.

Rev. A. J. spoke at many occasions in the community. A few of the papers contain what may have been his notes from which he spoke his message. One of these should be noted here It is labeled: "Sermon at the 75th Anniversary of the Coming of the Mennonites to America, held at Memorial Hall, Newton, Kansas, October 12, 1949. Topic: 'Lest We Forget.'

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal Home.

From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same;
Be Thou our guard while life shall last
And our eternal home.

An anniversary of this nature should stir in us a number of thoughts.

1. Stir the thought of real '*Thankfulness*' for God's ways in the past.
2. Stir the thought of '*Self-examination*'.
3. Stir us to renewed '*Consecration*'.
4. Stir us to launch out for greater accomplishments in the future."

He makes mention of ministers who have served in the Hoffnungsau Church. Such a listing occurs in a German writing, but the occasion for which it was prepared is not given. It is a brief historical sketch of the Hoffnungsau Church.

Elders:

Rev. Dietrich Gaeddert 1876-1900
Rev. Abraham Ratzlaff 1902-1925
Rev. A. J. Dyck 1925-1946

Ministers:

Rev. Peter Balzer, Peter Ratzlaff, Johann Ratzlaff, D. H. Unruh, Peter Heidebrecht, Peter Flaming, Peter Goertz, D. D. Unruh, Johann H. Epp, Abraham Albrecht, C. H. Voth.

Two of the above-mentioned served the congregation each 50 years or longer, two others forty years or more, one thirty or more years, the others a shorter period of time. Rev. Voth was elected in 1922 and is serving when this was written by Rev. Dyck. (His own period of service also stretched beyond thirty years.)

Rev. A. J. expressed himself well in speaking and in writing, whether in English or in German. In the German he was masterful. There came a time when he had served the congregation for 25 years that he requested of the congregation to relieve him of the active leadership responsibility in the near future. Exactly when this request was made is not known. The date does not occur on the "Bitte an der Gemeinde." It was probably early in 1939. The request is well stated and clearly set forth and is printed here in memory of his faithful service in the congregation.

Gesuch An die Gemeinde

Werte Gemeinde:

Es gereicht mir zur Freude, berichten zu duerfen, dasz es am 4. August dieses Jahres 25 Jahre sein werden, dasz

ich der Gemeinde als Prediger oder Leiter der Gemeinde gedient habe. Es ist mein Vorrecht gewesen und als flicht habe ich es emfunden, euch reichlich an den Sonn-und Festtagen mit dem Wort der predigt zu dienen, im Bewusztsein meiner eigenen Schwachheit habe ich diese getan, weiter habe ich euren Kindern den Jugendunterricht erteilen duerfen und sie mit der Taufe bedienen, der Gemeinde habe ich oft das Mahl des Herrn ueberreicht, in euren Krankenzimmern durfte ich einkehren und mit euch beten, euren Lieben, die von euch schieden durfte ich einen Nachruf tun und sie am Gang zum Grabe geleiten, eure Kinder habe ich in den Stand der Ehe eingesegnet, an euren Freudenfesten durfte ich oft mit dem Wort der predigt oder durch Ansprache dienen, einen Diakon und einen Prediger habe ich in userer Gemeinde ordeniert zum Dienst. Die Bibelstunden in der Gemeinde durfte ich leiten und viele weitere Arbeit in der Gemeinde habe ich versucht zu tun. Ich hoffe zu Gott dasz etwas fuer sein Reich durch meine Arbeit getan worden ist, aber wenn ich zurueck blicke, dann wird mir Bange ueber meine vielen Versaeumnisse und Schwachheiten und ich bete 'Herr vergib aus deiner Gnade.'

Nun da ich 25 Jahre gedient und zum groeszten Teil auch fuer den Unterhalt unserer Familie selber gesorgt, fuehle ich den Druck der Arbeit dieser Jahre und meine Kraft will nicht mehr ausreichen beides weiter zu tun. Daher komme ich mit der Bitte an die Gemeinde, mich mit dem ersten Sonntag im August dieses Jahres von dem aktiven Dienst in der Gemeinde zu entlassen. Ich will fortfahren fuer die Gemeinde zu beten und mitzu helfen wo ich kann, aber die Arbeit als Leiter wird mir zu schwer, daher die Bitte mir obiges Gesuch zu gewaehren, und fuer einen Leiter an der Gemeinde Schritte zu tun! Ich kann dann mit Liebe gegen die Gemeinde und ihres zukuenftigen Wohles aus der aktiven Arbeit austreten.

In Liebe und Hochachtung gegen die Gemeinde,
A. J. Dyck

This became another "first" for the congregation, and it was not easy for the membership to let go of his services. Perhaps many felt that he had not yet reached an age of retirement from active responsibility. Yet Rev. A. J. had in mind the best for the congregation and realized that the leadership should be in the hands of someone younger. Having had serious physical injuries, especially the tractor incident, he was no longer so strong and healthy even as he might appear to be. It took several more years before his request was granted, and even then there was much reluctance to let go of A. J. and his leadership abilities.

Chapter IX

THE LAST OF THE ELDERS ELECTED OUT OF THE CONGREGATION

The Hoffnungsau congregation continued the practice of electing out of its own membership the ministers and leaders. In this manner also Albert Gaeddert came to be elected first as minister in 1937 and as elder in 1946.

There is a sense of support that comes to a person asked to serve when he feels his own congregation has confidence in him and comes to ask whether he would be willing to have his name placed on the ballot. This was true in Albert Gaeddert's case. He was teaching at the time and did not feel that his training was adequate so he asked to have time to take seminary training. When the election was held Gaeddert was

Albert Gaeddert
Elder 1946-1959

elected. The request for time to take seminary training was granted. He entered Garrett Biblical Seminary, planning to finish the course there. However, before the third year was completed at Garrett came World War II. While still at Seminary the Mennonite Central Committee asked Gaeddert to open Civilian Public Service Camp No. 5 at Colorado Springs. This he did and moved with his family to Colorado Springs in 1941 and opened the camp that same year. The one year of service for which he was asked to come became five years before the work with MCC was completed. Gaeddert then completed his seminary training by correspondence and another quarter at school. He came to the church in the spring of 1946 to serve as pastor. In the fall of that year, November 24, he was ordained as elder by Rev. A. J. Dyck.

(Gaeddert always had a high regard and admiration of Rev. A. J. Rev. A. J. was teacher at Lake Shore when Albert graduated from elementary school; the two years at the Hoffnungsau Preparatory School were taught by Rev. A. J. while Gaeddert attended. He baptized Gaeddert, ordained him to the ministry, and to the eldership. Gaeddert would very much have liked to have A. J. continue to be elder and they share the leadership and the work together with Rev. Voth, the assistant minister; but A. J. preferred to turn over the leadership entirely. His counsel was most helpful and appreciated, and at no time did A. J. attempt to be influential in having decisions go his way. This was always greatly appreciated and made for a good working relationship. When A. J. was suddenly taken away in death in 1959, the loss was very keenly felt by the congregation and community and the wider circle of A. J.'s work, but perhaps even more keenly by Gaeddert who had lost a friend, a co-worker in the best sense.)

For the Mennonite Church the experience of World War II was not so traumatic as the World War I experience had been. World War I had taken the church quite by surprise and no arrangements could be worked out for any type of alternate service. In World War II this was different. An arrangement had been worked out with the government whereby conscientious objectors could enter alternative service. This service began with the men being drafted into Civilian Public Service camps. These camps were administered by the churches, although under the overall supervision of Selective Service System of the federal government. While the arrangement

left much to be desired it did provide a positive service the conscientious objector could render, especially after it became possible to select hospital service, or work with the federal health and sanitation division, and other agencies more directly related to meeting human needs.

For the church there were also some "blessings in disguise" developing from this CPS experience. One of these was the experience of men being put into camps and hospital units together with others from various denominations and the various Mennonite conferences, thus learning to know each other across conference and denominational lines. It was not just a casual acquaintance, but we learned to know each other personally with our likes and our dislikes. We learned to appreciate each other for what we were and sometimes we found that the rather glib and superficial ways we had of thinking of M.B.'s and O.M.'s, and Holdemen, G.C.'s, and others just did not make sense. We found that down underneath we were persons each with our own personalities, and we learned to respect one another for what we were—not for the group or conference or denomination we happened to belong to. That this should make a difference in the church of the future was a hope that grew within us.

From our congregation there were 34 men drafted into the service during the World War II draft. Of these 25 entered the CPS program, seven entered as noncombatants, and two entered the army as regulars. The length of time served varied, some served nearly five years, with the period of drafting finally ending in 1946, and by early 1947 our men had returned home again.

No doubt this experience enlarged our horizons, and it opened our appreciation for new contacts and new possible working relationships.

The congregation at home found very good ways of remembering the men who were drafted. Letters were encouraged, as well as visits. While the men in CPS did not receive any pay, the church at home provided small stipends which by way of the MCC came to the men in camp, especially during the latter period of the program. Of course the entire program operation was not government funded, so that it became a heavy financial burden for the church to carry, but it was carried in a remarkable manner.

A further development during this time period for our congregation and sister-congregations was the growing awareness of the work of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). This committee was already operating before World War II but during the war the work of this committee touched our lives at a number of points. Not only did it touch the lives of the persons drafted, but as a congregation and a whole Mennonite Church we became deeply aware of the MCC. We looked to the MCC for guidance in the draft and the war program, and we found in the MCC a vehicle for developing other possible areas of service.

One such area of service that came out of this total experience was the Voluntary Service program. While the men from the congregations were giving their time in mental hospital service, the women were beginning to ask, Why can't we likewise give of our time in a similar manner? This question was considered seriously by churches and by groups of all kinds until plans were ready to present a program for V.S. to the MCC Executive Committee. It was not long until the first unit of ten was on its way to the hospital, ready to offer its services on a voluntary basis. Thus the program began and expanded rapidly. There were soon summer voluntary service programs, usually sponsored by the various conferences, or else by the MCC. Likewise the longer term Voluntary Service program developed, sometimes taking the persons overseas, but more often at home—in the States or in Canada.

Local congregations were, of course, the place from which these volunteers came, and so this involved us as individuals and as congregations. While we have not taken the time to find the names of all who have entered the Voluntary Service Program at one point or another, the number would be very sizable. This should be a project undertaken by someone within the congregation. It would be of interest to know what this would look like.

Among the various types of service preparations there were also those who prepared for work in the foreign Mission fields. Herb and LaVerna Ediger were at this time attending Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska, and while here felt the call to enter the Foreign Mission work. They chose to go out under the Sudan Interior Mission. Herb was a member of Hoffnungsau, and LaVerna at Alexanderwohl. They were or-

dained for this work by the Rev. P. A. Wedel, pastor at Alexanderwohl, on November 1, 1953.

They left for their field of service in Ethiopia on July 16, 1954. Here they served for seven years. In September of 1971 they were granted a leave of absence from the field, which they are using for rest, for itineration, and for further preparation. They hope to return to the same field in 1975.

Other developments under MCC likewise touched our congregation. During the war there were large numbers of persons who responded to the call to help in the Overseas Relief Service. Personnel was one of the most valuable contributions that we could make in the relief program overseas. People working in relief would work with those overseas who were often refugees taken away from their homes, fleeing the occupied homeland, without food, clothing, destitute, forsaken. Distribution of food and clothing and other necessities could thus be done by our own people, and we at home knew that what was sent across would get to the people who needed such help. At the peak of the overseas relief program there were more than 300 persons engaged in it. This has been an ongoing experience so that today there are more than 700 persons involved, not all in the relief program, for that is shifting from place to place with the needs that develop, but these more than 700 people are in the total work of the MCC both at home and abroad. "In the Name of Christ" was the designation worn by persons in the work, or placed as a label on the bales and packages that were sent. It is to this day a very meaningful designation for many.

Still another program that grew out of this period, and in which again the local congregations were directly touched, was the Pax Program. Pax means peace, and the program was arranged whereby drafted single men could volunteer their service for overseas work under MCC. It usually was a three-year period of service, but not necessarily, depending somewhat upon the travel distance required to get to the place of service. Early in the Pax Program congregations often developed a Pax Fund, which would be used to enable persons to go overseas who would otherwise not have been able to pay their way. Hoffnungsau started such a fund. Here again it would be of interest to know how many have entered this program from Hoffnungsau.

Thus we had entered a time of becoming aware of a "larger world," and we had experienced in various ways what the Gospel of Christ lays upon the heart of the individual, and with the individual it enlarges and finds its way into the congregation, and it helps us all to experience anew the call of Christ.

There must have been times during the early stages of these developments when people began to feel that in order to render a meaningful service in the Name of Christ it was necessary to go overseas, or at least to go away from home some distance. More recently there has come a much better balance in that the needs at home are seen as equally important; in fact that what is done at home right where we live and work is often the very deepest and fullest expression of our faith. We tried to become aware of needs at home or close around us. Volunteer groups went to nearby towns and cities to give help to older people often without ways and means of repairing their cottage, maintain their homes and yards, lacking proper diets and needing errands run. This would take groups of persons, often the youth groups of the churches to spend a weekend in Wichita, or in Oklahoma among the Indian Mission churches, helping with such work as had been arranged beforehand and perhaps assisting in the worship service on Sunday morning.

Whether it was out of something like this that the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) had its beginning is not altogether clear, but this again came under the direction of MCC in its earlier development, and it was a very meaningful tool which congregations could use to offer their assistance. Usually what this MDS group would respond to was local disasters, caused by tornadoes, floods, fires, etc. Large groups of men and boys to begin with, but later the women, too, were eager to become a part of this and found ready entrance because there was so much that could be done by both women and men; not the least of the service that could be rendered was that of just "standing by and with" those who were victims of the disaster. Just to know that someone cares enough to come to give help has often proven to be a very real assurance to those who were hard hit.

This was also the time that our retreat grounds were developed at Camp Mennoscah. For the most part these

grounds were used for retreats by the youth of our conference, and later the children who also had their retreats by age groups. It is perhaps difficult to measure just what has been done by retreat programs, but there were not a few who found this very meaningful, and who found themselves, or felt the call of Christ in one way or another. Frequently, too, these grounds were used by older groups. From Hoffnungsau it became an annual event to have a group go for an overnight retreat. Often someone from Bethel College or from another congregation would be used to lead our thinking and our discussion. Recreation and much good fellowship sparked these retreats often as highlights in the church year.

Locally some new additions to the congregational program were made during this time. Encouragement was given that husband and wife sit together in the worship service, and that families sit together and worship together as a unit. The new church building helped greatly in this matter, for it has become common practice now for families to sit together in the worship service. Church bulletins were introduced as aids in the worship service and for listing of announcements of events to come that would be of direct interest to the members. We began printing and mimeographing the annual meeting reports by the different organizations, so that those attending could follow in the presentation of the reports. Copies were usually available beyond the annual meeting date and could be picked up. The women's organizations were already in operation by this time, but the men had not formed into a Mennonite Men's Fellowship. The Men's Fellowship organization made it easier to fit into the Mennonite Disaster Service program, and it provided channels locally for securing help that was needed.

During this time also some help was enlisted from Bethel College. We began asking for help in the music department, especially for directing choirs. This did not take the place of local talent for work in this area, but when there was no one available for a specific task, we were often able to find help at the college. We also availed ourselves of teaching help from the college; this would usually take the form of a short series of two or three evenings either in succession or the same night for a few successive weeks. Perhaps the more prolonged type of help which came when Mr. and Mrs. Ferd

Ediger helped us during the three months of summer in the work of the church will be best and longest remembered. They assisted in the total church program and Ferd did most of the preaching that summer. Likewise Harold and Rosella Duerksen came to work with us one summer, Harold doing the preaching and Rosella assisting with the music. Harold and Rosella were later asked to serve on an interim basis while Gaeddert was asked by MCC to initiate the I-W program. It was during this time when we were already in the new building that Harold and Rosella helped us decide to place a pipe organ into the sanctuary.

One of the unforgettable events that occurred on Saturday morning, February 14, 1948, was the complete destruction of our church building by fire. This was the large, white, frame building that had been built in 1898. It stood as a landmark on the same grounds where the adobe-brick building had stood before, and where the present structure now stands. The fire had started up under the eaves and was noticed quite early, but there was no equipment at hand with which to fight the flames and by the time fire fighting equipment from the neighboring towns arrived, the flames had enveloped the entire structure and it could not be saved. News spread very quickly and fortunately neighbors came in time to remove virtually all of the contents before the flames made it impossible to re-enter the burning structure. All we could do was to stand by and to keep the buildings at the farm place nearby from catching fire, for there was a strong north wind blowing. Before the large crowd of people had dispersed, time was taken for prayer, thanking God that no one had been hurt in the fire and seeking His guidance for His people in the days ahead. This was on a Saturday and while we were still together the offer from the Willis School Board to use their building for worship the next morning had been accepted, and this remained our meeting place for more than a year while the new building was erected.

The planning for a new church building took place immediately. A building committee was elected. On this committee were Ernest Heidebrecht, chairman; John P. Franz, Eldo Schmidt, Carl Kim, Elmer Voth; later Rev. A. J. Dyck and Rev. Albert Gaeddert were asked to serve with the same committee. Early in the program the decision was made to use

volunteer labor where possible. A committee was elected to arrange for securing volunteer help and to schedule them for the time needed. Olin Schmidt, Henry B. Martens, and Wilbur Schmidt made up this committee and made it possible for considerable volunteer help to be used in various parts of the building program.

It was decided to engage an architect to help plan the building. All of us were eager to have the building process get under way. It is at this point where we did not give ourselves sufficient time. We might have done quite a bit more toward engaging an architect who would have designed a building that would have given expression to our rich heritage; but we were not so sensitive to our heritage as we are now when we are at the centennial crossroads of our history. While all of us felt quite pleased with the building that was erected, yet we are aware that the structure itself does not signify anything distinctive about us and our heritage. The arrangement is simple with the classroom space on the ground floor and in the basement. It is serving our needs quite well.

We began having in mind three points during the building process where we wanted especially to celebrate God's love and our thankfulness to Him: the first—a ground breaking service; then the cornerstone laying service; and finally the dedication of the building when completed. The dedication service came in 1951. It was a beautiful day, and there was much joy for all of us at this occasion. Services were held

Present Church Building
Dedicated 1950

both morning and evening with thankfulness to God for having brought us safely through this time of building the church. There had been no serious injuries and for this we were all grateful.

It was an experience also in stewardship. Although the cost of the building had been considerable, something like $145,000, yet the funds came together with relative ease, and what was

Interior of present building

Parsonage just north of the church, about ten years after it was moved in.

even more astonishing was the giving of the congregation to the regular causes of the conference, both General Conference and Western District, and to MCC causes, had not suffered at all during the time of giving for building the church. It was again attesting to what has been frequently experienced—when a need is commonly felt, our people are ready to meet that need!

Although the building of a parsonage came much earlier than the building of the church, yet it should be mentioned here also. This was another of the changes that came about; indeed, it was another of the "firsts" for our congregation. The first three elders of the congregation each had their own home in which they lived; they lived on the farm and continued to live on the farm while they served the church as elder or pastor. (The ministers likewise lived in their own home.) But the Gaedderts did not have a home of their own, yet they wanted to live out among the people of the parish. So the church provided a parsonage. For the first time in the history of Hoffnungsau—the congregation bought a parsonage! The people wanted to build a parsonage, but this was during the war and building materials were not available. So a house was purchased near Sedgwick and moved on the church grounds. A basement was prepared and the house moved onto it. Considerable remodeling was needed to get the house into shape, but this was done and the Gaedderts moved into the Hoffnungsau parsonage!

The parsonage has undergone several remodelings on the inside but the outside of it has remained very much like it was when first placed there.

One of the interests that has always been strong at Hoffnungsau is that of helping those in need. So there have been various "arms of the church." The women's societies began early in this century, as early as 1908. Almost any annual report could be picked up and quoted, saying what the mission societies did. A short quotation here from the Senior Mission Society in 1958:

> Besides our regular monthly meetings we had our Family Nite on January 27th. Since this year was our 50th year of service we had a program to observe the occasion.
>
> At our regular June meeting we had a guest day in observance of our 50th anniversary. In June a group of our women went to Newton to the MCC Relief Center to put in a day of mending.
>
> This year we took part in making a small quilt, sewing dresses for girls and buying sweaters and trousers for boys for the Weiler Childrens Home in France. We filled the assignment from our district advisor which was as follows: 50 school bags, 50 hot pads, 40 layettes, 80 lbs. bandages, quilt blocks, a double-bed spread, and 5 frosting mixes for cakes. This all went to the Congo in Africa. Comforts were

tied for relief while others made quilts for our mission sale.

For our monthly projects we brought new articles for relief, such as clothing for men, women, and children of all ages; sheets and blankets, or we had collections for wool yarn for relief, for migrants, and missionaries' Pensions Fund.

Our Service Committee has again tried to cheer the sick, the lonely, the aged and those away from home in service, with cards, small gifts or visits. They also were in charge of canning fruit for one of our families where there is illness. . . .

Another of the mission societies which has not been mentioned, the Happy Hour Circle, is composed of younger women, most of them are mothers of smaller children. They are likewise a service agency, an arm of the church. Here is part of their report:

Our Christmas Dinner was again one of the highlights of our year. Our "White Christmas" gift was money for the orphanage in India. Another highlight was a "Japanese Tea" served by Mrs. Bernard Thiessen, missionary to Japan. She also spoke to the members and their daughters. Mrs. Ferd Ediger was also with us.

This year the circle members donated all the articles for the sale, including money donations. This made it possible to give more money for missions and relief.

In November, a day was spent at the Relief Center to help with mending. We had an all day relief sewing in January. Something new was brought for our monthly Relief Project. Also used clothing was accepted any time. Our assignment from the Western District Advisor was filled by different committees. It included a large quilt, 2 pairs of pillowcases, 40 layettes, bandages, quilt blocks, 50 hot pads, 50 schoolbags, and 7 cake mixes.

Beginning with Christmas, members of the Circle went caroling and took gifts and cookies to bring cheer to others. Those in service were remembered. A Christmas box was sent to Herb Edigers. Throughout the year we tried to bring cheer by visiting, with songs, flowers, or gifts. May some have been uplifted through our efforts.

Together with the Senior Society we served the Bethel Booster Banquet in our church in April. Also served at two farm sales—Dave Gaedderts and H. B. Martens.

We say thanks be to God for what has been done, and may we be aware of the open doors of service in the coming year!

Not only do the women work together in service to the

needy at home and abroad, but the men, too, have organized into a Men's Brotherhood. They call their organization an arm of the church. This is a short quotation from one of their annual reports:

> Again in the past year we gave the monthly programs at the Rescue Mission in Wichita, which we hope was a blessing to the men at the Mission, as well as for those who went there from the church.
>
> The Labor Committee reports work of different kinds: Plowing and filling silo for the sick, and for a widow, helping at the college, taking care of Mrs. J. B. Ediger's land (a widowed missionary); giving help to the tornado-stricken people in ElDorado; and other deeds of kindness. We wish to thank all who took part.
>
> Our programs consisted of various natures, as touring the Hesston Manufacturing Plant, recreation, hamburger fry, Pax, and general programs of information.
>
> Throughout the year we collected a total of $612.57, part of which went to our brethren in South America for the Chaco Roadway; for our Church Pax Fund we collected $243.25. Also we secured a hospital bed which is available for someone who is in need of it.
>
> We thank God for the little which we have done, and we ask ourselves: Have we done enough for His Kingdom? If not, let us rededicate ourselves anew for the year to come.

We quote here part of the 1958 Annual Report given by the pastor. This gives an estimate of some of the events that took place within the congregation.

> "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits"Psalm 103:1.
>
> . . . One asks himself the question: just what should be contained in the report to the congregation? You would likely answer, that one should mention the highlights, the high points of the year's activities! Very true. But what may be high points for one need not necessarily be so for all of us. Nonetheless, here are some of them. In fact, here follows the listing of some events in which we have taken part, divided into three broad categories, named as follows: Local Church Functions; Church and Conference Activities; and The Church In The Community. The number of things that come to one's mind as one tries to recall from the records what has taken place during the ten months, is quite an array of programs, covering a wide area.

First, the local church functions:

Our Annual Meeting of the Congregation on New Year's Day, where we looked over the work of the 12 months just past.

Samuel Stephen here, Sunday morning.

Samuel, a product of our India Mission Field, was preparing here to go back to take over the Christian Education program in our churches in India. His keen and alert mind, always working within a Christian frame of reference, will make him an influence to bring honor to Christ in India.

Senior Mission Society Family night, Jan. 27;

Observing their 50th Anniversary of service, a program was given portraying some of their history.

Once a month our Brotherhood went to the Rescue Mission in Wichita, for a spiritual ministry to the men who come to the Mission from the streets of the city. How can we measure what is being done there? Perhaps we need to say with the Apostle Paul: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." If we can do a little of what either Paul or Apollos did, we know that God will give the increase. And what it does for us in giving us an outlet for a portion of our evangelistic outreach, is reason enough to keep this avenue open.

Host to the Bethel College District Fellowship;

Together with six other G.C. churches, we had opportunity here to fellowship together, and to remind ourselves of the place that Bethel College holds in the General Conference Church program. A program and banquet filled the evening.

Missionaries we have had here:

This year we have had the Harold Ratzlaffs here, the Ferd Edigers, and the Bernard Thiessens. We had the privilege of helping the Harold Ratzlaffs buy some equipment to use in their mission work, and they will come again to tell us what they have purchased.

Bethel College A Capella Choir program:

This was the last time that the Choir came under the direction of Dr. Hohmann, and it helped one to appreciate the contribution he has made to good music at Bethel.

Dr. Melvin Gingerich here:

To tell about the response in the Far East, especially Japan, Korea, Formosa, to the Gospel of Peace. When such work is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ it speaks its message even to the civilian population not all of which is Christian.

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HOME FRONT Film shown here:

This film is the product of our own Board of Missions, and it helps us to see the work done in the homeland, especially how devoted individuals can have a part in the work of missions, the businessman or the farmer.

Pre-Easter Services:

Rev. Leo Miller, pastor of the Goessel Mennonite Church, brought a series of very practical messages, which lifted us spiritually.

Voluntary Service Program slides shown here:

Leo Driedger, G.C. Director of V.S., was here to interpret the pictures.

Sunday School Teachers Fellowship:

So that we might look together at our common task as teachers in the S.S. an evening's program and a fellowship meal were enjoyed by the teachers, the assisttants, and the officers of the S.S. Rev. E. J. Miller spoke to the group.

The Men of the Congregation invited the boys to a hamburger fry:

The boys seem to appreciate this, and the evening resulted in a sizable gift to the Western Dist. Conf. Mennonite Men's project.

The Mission Sale:

A very fine assortment of articles had been made, and the results of the sale were gratifying indeed.

Catechism and Baptism:

The period of instruction in which one tries to face the young people with the claims of Christ upon them, and bring them to the point of personal surrender to Christ in baptism, is always a high point in the church year. We are grateful to God for these young souls, and we utter a prayer for each that he or she may become a real witness for Christ.

Communion Services

Again we had three of them, in February, in June, and in October. "This do in remembrance of Me" continues to ring in our souls as we come to the Table of our Lord.

Our Bible Study Program

For five or six months we met weekly, and the participation was quite good. "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed . . ."

Our Vacation Bible School Program

Altho held in the school buildings about us, rather than in the church, we continue our interest in this significant program. "Train up a child in the way that he shall go, and when he is old he will not depart therefrom."

Our Choirs:

We are grateful for the work of our choirs, both the junior choir and the Men's Chorus. When one observes the high quality of our musical talent, one longs for a strong, standing choir of mixed voices.

OUR CHURCH IN CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES:

We are tied to our Conference, both the District and the General Conference, with strong ties: together with our sister churches we are in a fellowship of common work, common goals, and common endeavors. To enumerate a few of these, we begin with:

The Western Dist. Conference sessions:

The General Conference has not met this year, but our Dist. Conf. has, and a number of our people were seen there, both delegates and those who were not delegates. It affords a very good way of keeping up with what goes on. Other activities should be mentioned such as the following:

Mennonite Disaster Service—

Here should be mentioned both the work in the disaster areas, and also the meetings where the work is planned, and where they worship and plan together.

Women's Organizations

Gradually the women folks are being used in the disaster work too. Of course, their long established Mission work, Relief canning, sewing, worship and planning meetings continue to be their area of work.

Voluntary Service Program

We had five of our young people in the summer program this year, and we believe that this is a program where the witness possibilities are developed, helping us to become the 'salt' and 'light' that we are to be. V.S. is not an end in itself, but a means to a greater service in the future.

Relief Canning Program

This continues to be one of the joint efforts where we work together with sister churches in a common cause.

Young People's Programs

One could mention a number of their programs here; only a few: The WDC Y.P. meetings, especially the banquet on Saturday evening, was a good occasion. The series of S.S. lessons during the summer months, closing with 3 discussions on Vocations and on Voluntary Service.

A Panel Discussion on the various types of I-W service, led by Elmer Ediger, brought out clearly the values of the different types of service.

Programs which they rendered in Old People's Homes, at Prairie View, etc.

Social Concerns Committee of the G.C. and of the WDC.

I mention these committees because they are working on some frontier fields in which our church is definitely interested. One of these fields is the Racial Tension in our country. Even tho we may not actually come into contact with this too often, yet we want to be informed, we want to examine our attitudes, and we want also to find places where we can give our witness. How would it be if we would engage a well-qualified Negro teacher in one of our public schools? Or, would we be ready to help provide scholarships for Negroes who are denied enrollment in schools in the South, or who need help to go to college?

Another field that we need to be concerned about is that of giving a positive witness to our peace convictions.

A third field, related to the second, is to speak out our convictions on the bomb-testing question.

THE CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY

There have been a number of occasions and places where our church has shared in the activities in the community; here are listed a few of these:

The Buhler Meetings

A series of six meetings held in the Buhler Grade School and sponsored by the 4 churches: Buhler, Buhler M.B., Hebron, and Hoffnungsau. Rev. Roy Roth of Hesston served this year.

Union Services in the Summer

Here the 5 churches in and near Inman unite for 5 evening services.

Alten Fest at Hebron

This is sponsored by the churches of the community, and a German service is arranged with a lunch and fellowship hour following. This seems to be greatly appreciated especially by the older people.

Conference on Agriculture, Buhler Mennonite Church

This was sponsored by the Education Committee of the WDC.

Peace Conference at Eden Mennonite Church

Dr. Henry Hitt Craine, Methodist minister from Detroit, Mich, the speaker.

Rev. Vincent Harding at the Bethel Church

Vincent Harding was used by the WDC in several areas of our district.

Meeting of School Principals and Board members, and pastors

A Chili supper, during which we talked over some concerns that schools and churches have in common, relative to the home, our children, and young people.

Programs readered by our Men's Brotherhood
In the Hutchinson State Reformatory
At the Wichita Rescue Mission
Young People's Banquet
Held once each year for the Young People of the Buhler-Inman Community
Meetings of the Buhler-and-community ministers
Meetings of the Inman-and-community ministers.

Many others could be listed. In all of this the church continues to stand at the center of the community. Let us do our part that it stays in the center of our community, and its people continue to be the 'salt' and 'light' of the world![1]

It was in the latter part of 1958 when the Bethel Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota, extended a call to the Gaedderts to become pastor of their congregation. While other inquiries had come earlier, yet none had quite raised the question for the Gaedderts so directly. After long and serious and prayerful consideration, the Gaedderts accepted this call, and the congregation was notified of it.

This was another "first" for the congregation, for the elders before had served our congregation to the end. It provided a period of much discussion. But after a period of much consultation and prayerful consideration the congregation made plans to elect a pulpit committee which was to find another pastor for the congregation.

In August of 1959 the Gaedderts left for their newly accepted pastorate, and with some interim pastoral help at Hoffnungsau, the work continued under good leadership. Rev. Lamont Woelk was chosen by the pulpit committee as the one to be presented to the congregation. He was engaged to become the new pastor and began his work in July of 1960.

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1. Annual Business Meeting Reports, Nov. 6 and 7, 1958 (Unpublished Manuscript) p.p. 1-5.

Chapter X

LAMONT WOELK CALLED TO BECOME PASTOR

The Gaedderts accepted a call to the Bethel Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in 1959. Wanting to be in Mountain Lake by the time school would begin, they left in late July from the church, following a two-week period of vacation.

A pulpit committee had been elected to call a pastor from outside the congregation. This was the first time this had happened in Hoffnungsau, and it was not an easy changeover to make. Lamont Woelk was given this first call from the outside, and he came in July of 1960.

Lamont Woelk
Pastor 1961-1965

Rev. P. K. Regier undertook to serve the church as interim pastor for this period of almost a year. Having come from

the Hoffnungsau congregation, he was ready to serve this interim period and served the church well.

Our church had not engaged her ministers thus far on a full-support salary. During Gaeddert's period of service there occurred the transition from rather minimal financial assistance for ministers and pastors to a very modest support. This was in accord with the wishes of the Gaedderts, for they had access to a parental farm; also Gaeddert enjoyed operating a farm, and they could earn partial support in this way. But when Woelk came, he had no such side-income and was fully dependent for support from the congregation. This was not an easy transition for the congregation, and yet it worked no hardship; it did help all of us to see what was required when a family is wholly dependent upon the salary paid by the congregation.

Woelk was a hard working pastor and did some things that had not gotten done before. Although the church was incorporated, its constitution had really never been updated. The work of changing the bylaws and bringing the constitution up to date was undertaken, and with a number of meetings and hard work of a committee set aside to make the needed changes, the document soon began to take shape and was ready to be read for adoption. It was finally adopted October 14, 1962.

Although church bulletins had been used for some years, it was during this time that a newsletter or church paper was published, prepared by the congregation, and made available to all members, especially those away from home. This was greatly appreciated by those not living in the community; it was a direct means of keeping in contact with what was happening in the home community. It was called "Hoffnungsau Views," and came out for the first time in 1961.

Up to this time the deacons who had been elected had served for life terms. Frequently there had been mention made of changing the system; many congregations had made the change much earlier, electing the deacons for a period of two or three years, with the provision that they could succeed themselves once, but then would need to vacate the position for a year before being eligible again for re-election. This new arrangement had several positive features: for one thing it made possible the election of younger persons to become

deacons; or it made possible the transferring of the responsibilities as well as the opportunities of this office to more members. So also during this time of Woelk's pastoral responsibilities the two-deacon arrangement, who were elected for life, was changed to a four-deacon system, to serve for a four-year term. The two who had served were not asked to vacate their positions but were privileged to serve as long as they desired.

Solomon Ediger who had served as deacon since 1935 passed away in 1961. In the same year an election of deacons resulted in the election of three persons: one to fill the place of Solomon Ediger who passed away, and two others so that there were four in all. Elected were Elmer Gaeddert, Otto Schmidt, and H. H. Janzen. The following year John J. Dyck resigned his responsibilities as deacon and Irwin R. Schmidt was elected to fill the vacancy. There were now four deacons each serving a term of four years.

It was during this time also, in October of 1960, that Rev. C. H. Voth retired from active service as an associate minister. He had served since 1923 when he was elected by the congregation. While his eyesight permitted, he had served as church secretary for many years, keeping a record of meetings of the congregation and of the meetings of ministers and deacons. His was a supportive role that he filled very ably, and there were many who appreciated his faithfulness, his sermons that he preached, and the visitation of those sick and in need of spiritual help.

During this time the federal government was continuing peace time conscription for military service. The I-W Program was in operation, which was an alternative service program for conscientious objectors, giving them the privilege to serve in hospitals and other types of humanitarian aid that met the requirements of being "in the interests and welfare of the nation." In this work the men were free to receive the prevailing wage being paid by the employing agency, and in many ways they were different from civilian employees only in the sense that their choice of employment was prescribed by the government. Whether this served to the ultimate good for the drafted conscientious objector and for the church is very much open to question; it was an experiment that was beset with many problems.

The Mennonite Church at large found itself more and more removed from the I-W program, endorsing rather the Voluntary Service Program that offered another alternative for the C.O. draftee to work more specifically in church-related alternative service and to do so on a voluntary service basis. Within the framework of the Voluntary Service Program persons entering it might volunteer his services, often without pay, but having the benefit of working in a project with needy people, and thus giving the feeling that his time was used to help in a cause which gave help where help was needed.

One of the programs which was developed was called Pax. This was for single men in an overseas program. This became a rather challenging program for many. Bill Ediger was the first from our congregation to enter Pax in June of 1962. Under MCC the work took Bill to Greece for a three-year period, helping the natives to a better means of livelihood. Pax service took the young men away from home for either a two or three-year period, but it proved for many a most worthwhile experience.

It was during this time too that the Voluntary Service Program of the church was greatly enlarged. There was summer voluntary service in which large numbers of high school aged people and older entered. This gave many a young person an experience together with his/her peers in work that proved a challenge to him and which in many instances influenced the rest of his life.

When Woelk came to our church he had been to our Seminary at Elkhart for two years but had not been able to finish Seminary. He had come with the expressed hope that there would be a time when arrangements could be made for him to complete his seminary course. In 1963 he was given the call for a second three-year term of service at Hoffnungsau, in which he asked to be given a leave of absence to complete his seminary training. This was granted by the congregation and during the time Woelk was away at seminary, Dick Rempel, then a student at Bethel College, served as interim pastor. This was during part of 1963 and '64. Returning in June of 1964, Woelk continued his hard and faithful work until in 1966 he received and accepted a call from the Southern Hills Mennonite Church in Topeka. This was not altogether strange, because the Hoffnungsau congregation during

Woelk's pastorate had given considerable assistance to this congregation in the city which houses our State Capitol.

It had been a period of several changes, some of which were not easy for the congregation to make. As we look in retrospect on what was done, who would say that these were not made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

Perhaps there should be listed here part of the report Pastor Woelk made. Some of it reflects a trend in membership which was part of the phase of rural church decline for many years. He listed a survey of numerical growth from '54 to '64, which he had compiled for the General Conference on the Hoffnungsau Church.

Accessions			
By Baptism			
Candidates from our church	78		
Candidates from non-Mennonite churches	1		
Total by baptism		79	
By letter			
From General Conference churches	16		
From other Mennonite churches	2		
From non-Mennonite churches	4		
Total by letter		22	
Total Assessions			101
Loss			
By death		46	
By transfer			
To other General Conference Churches	60		
To other Mennonite Churches	8		
To Non-Mennonite Churches	23		
Total by transfer		91	
Dropped		3	
Total loss			140
Net Loss			39

This shows the general trend our membership is taking. It does not include the figures for 1965.[1]

The paragraphs on "In Service" are typical of what has been repeated frequently in our congregation, and we give this as being representative of other years as well, though the names would be different.

The Sam Ediger and Olin Schmidt families and Lawrence and Kathryn Penner have completed their terms of service and returned home—Edigers and Schmidts to our community and Penners to the Bethel College campus where Lawrence is completing college. Continuing in service but scheduled to complete their terms this year are Ron and Leanna Ediger in Evanston, Ill., Galen Froese in Denver, and Orvin and Janet Voth in Newfoundland. The Herb Ediger family is home on furlough from Ethiopia this year.

Loren and Sharon Martens began service in Evanston last March. Kenneth Ratzlaff began service in Denver in August. And Arlo and Teresa Schmidt have just begun service in Downey, Calif. In addition many other persons from our congregation served for shorter terms in such places as Gulfport, Mississippi, Elkhart, Ind., Chicago, Ill., Camp Mennoscah, and a variety of other places through the summer V.S. program and MDS. This type of service continues to be one of the most significant ways by which we give witness to our faith. It is appropriate that this is so because it is a type of witness unique to our Mennonite heritage.[2]

There is reflected in this entire report the caring concern of a very hard working pastor on the one hand, and on the other hand the struggle and loneliness that a pastor feels at times very deeply, so that it becomes almost overwhelming. It is the hand of God that seems to come silently, taking hold of his hand—gently leading on again. This is reflected in the last several paragraphs listed "Concerns" and "Conclusion."

Finally I share two concerns. The first is about the method we use in considering and deciding on the extension of the minister's term of service. The constitution provides for a 3-year term and a meeting of the congregation to consider calling the minister for another term. In my own experience as well as in observing other churches I have noted that this is either handled in a routine fashion that involves no serious evaluation of the minister's work or of the minister-congregation relationship and results in a nearly, or completely unanimous vote; or it degenerates into a politicking and electioneering campaign. The first does not do justice to the nature of the work the minister and the congregation are engaged in. The second is hardly becoming for a congregation of the body of Jesus Christ. Instead of setting a time limit on the pastor's term of service it would be better if there were specified times when the work of the minister and the pastor-congregation relationship were seriously studied and evaluated. The study should be directed by a small responsible group of people—

possibly the deacons or one person from each of the four boards. They would do the main job of evaluating the work the minister has been doing as well as what has been happening in the congregation during his ministry. A council meeting could be devoted to this. A congregational meeting or two should be a part of the procedure both for discussion and for reporting of findings of the study. Individuals who have special concerns or interests could speak personally to the committee. This kind of evaluation would give both the minister and the congregation a much clearer picture of their common work and their relationship and would enable the minister to see quite clearly whether or not the time for him to leave was near. And it would enable the committee to tell the minister in a kind way if they felt it wise for him to consider moving to another field of service. Doing this, rather than just voting, every three years would be a much more positive and responsible approach. And it would be moving in the direction of sharing in decision making of which I spoke earlier.

My second concern is for the young people. It is true that 27% of our members are 65 years of age and over. But we do have a large and fine group of young people. One of our major efforts ought to be in helping them to be prepared spiritually and morally for the kind of world in which they will live. And the world in which they will live will be drastically different from the one in which we grew up. Even this community is changing far more than some of you realize. The ministry to youth ought to be your greatest concern in choosing another minister. To fail your youth is not only to betray them but also to betray yourselves for they are your offspring.

Conclusion

And so ends 5 years of service among you. It has been a challenging and enlightening experience through which I have grown considerably. The difficult experiences have only made the pleasant ones more sweet and the pleasant ones far outweigh the difficult ones in number and in every other way. All that remains are the memories of the pleasant experiences and regrets that I could not have been wiser in working through the difficult ones.

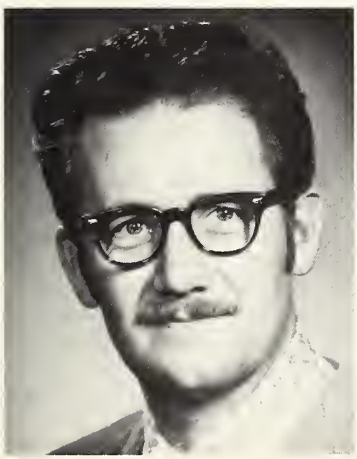
You are fine people to serve and work with. We hold you closely in our hearts. We owe you thanks in so many ways for your kindnesses, your words of encouragement and your supporting prayers. We continue to remember you fondly and to pray that our common Lord will give you His strength and wisdom to follow His will for you in the future.[3]

1. Annual Business Meeting Reports, Nov. 16 and 18, 1965 (Unpublished manuscript), p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 4
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

Chapter XI

HOFFNUNGSAU FROM 1967-1972

As stated earlier, Lamont Woelk went back to Elkhart to complete his seminary training. It was during this time that Hoffnungsau engaged Dick Rempel to serve as interim pastor. Rempel was a student at Bethel College at the time. Rempel was married and came from Canada. With his parents he had come from Russia in the 1920's; his experience was similar to that our forefathers had who came in 1874. When Woelk accepted the call to become pastor of the Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, Kansas, the pulpit committee was able to secure the services of Peter W. Goering as interim pastor for a number of months, and also Alvin T. van der Smissen for nearly a year. A call had been extended to Dick Rempel



Dietrich Rempel
Pastor 1967-1972

and family to become the pastor at Hoffnungsau. He accepted this call and following completion of seminary work came in August of 1967 to assume duties as pastor.

During these years the work of the church went forward with new vigor. There seems to be a coming of new experiences when new leadership comes to the church. Some of this is reflected in an annual report, and we take the following as somewhat typical of what was happening as the pastor reflects upon a year's work in the congregation.

> "Cry!" That's what a voice said to him. "What shall I cry," he replied. "Tell them to farm with open eyes and to work with awareness. Perhaps they will notice that grass grows and goes; that wheat greens and yellows; that milo matures and is combined; that flowers fade and that beauty is temporary. Tell them that—in contrast—the ". . . word of our God will stand forever" Isaiah 40:6ff.
>
> Isaiah reminded city people of their rural background. None of us need such reminders. But what do we need? What does still speak to us? What contrasts in our lives still elicit from us the admiration and love for God Isaiah knows of? Has Isaiah's command to: "Get up a high mountain . . . to lift your voice with strength. . . , and to 'cry': 'Behold your God'," also been our cry as we listen to the echoes which constitute our Annual Meeting.
>
> A paradoxical sense of weariness pervades our ranks. And too often it's the weariness of the whipped Jew in Egypt rather than the weariness of the purposefully wandering Jew across the Red Sea.
>
> We are tired of long service (s); unhappy with 5 year terms of office; disillusioned with the need of regular worship; unwilling to "offer" regular amounts of money; and unable of sustained enthusiasm for Christ. We expect much diversion and assume others' interest. We know much, yet find life T.V. dulled; we do much and yet thrive only on frequent change. To summarize: Have we pretended to our souls that, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry" (Luke 12:19). Yet, despite color T.Vs, and full bodies we know that it won't last. Security of prosperity or position is only for "fools."
>
> Paradoxically, unrest and dissatisfaction with the status quo are necessary for new living. Signs of the latter are not absent among us. Only where doubts move to new faith, and when questions receive answers is newness evolved. Doubt as a perennial stance is latent faithlessness, but earnest searching and dynamic dependence on the Holy

Spirit create new life. Let us continue to hold the two in true tension.

Our corporate life is quite changed—without serious static from anyone. The worship pattern is altering—though for some not (or too) radically. Estes Conference influence will continue to be felt here. Our Wednesday nites of the old order are finally dead. Serious Bible study is hardly happening; I don't mean devotional reading of the Bible. But for our Stewardship study few classes grappled seriously with that section out of II Cor. 8 and 9. Some classes put it aside and many individuals felt affronted by such a "childish" approach to the Scriptures. Our adult S.S. classes are quite stagnated in terms of method and content. I'll bet that some individuals haven't opened their mouths once during the 50 hours of Sunday School this year. In many instances teachers talk too much themselves and don't expect participation. Our adult S.S. absentee rate is bad—what are you doing about it?

One intensely concerned person justly challenged our lip service to prayer. He said, "If there is such a widespread belief in prayer in our congregation, why do you have such a small number at the Sunday 9 a.m. session?" Of course the same thing was true when we had Wednesday evening prayer and Bible study. Many of us would likely prefer being caught dead in a bar than in a prayer meeting. Jesus demanded "My house shall be called a house of prayer. . . ." No, I don't for a moment think that we have made it into a . . . den of thieves and robbers. . .", but what *have* we made of it?

Again, as last year I don't come before you with a specific list of basic achievements. You may consider this irresponsibility on my part. But those whom I have visited and those with whom we've had contact—know it, and the others know it too. Believe me, in many cases it is as difficult for me to go to you as it is for you to come to me. Unfortunately, in some cases I have gossiped about rather than visited with you; but I also hear that some of you are blameworthy in this department. "Father forgive us as. . . ."

First speakers are usually remembered least. Thus, by the time our Annual Meeting is over we'll have such an impressive list of Committee and project tabulations that my individual reflections will be forgotten. And that is as it should be. I will let my aspiration be ". . . they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, . . (Isaiah 40:31a) And for the congregation I see the path of *alertness*, *faith*, *bravery*, *strength*, and *love*. I Cor. 16:13-14.[1]

At a later date, after Rempels had already moved on to a

new post of duty at a pastorate in Canada, one of the members reflects upon some changes that had taken place during the years that Rempel served as pastor.

The church program became more flexible in the order of worship service. They became less formal with the working in of more things that happened spontaneously. There were unusual object lessons used to illustrate the points of a sermon, especially in speaking to the children. They were unusual, and at times crude so as to more effectively make their point. At one time a large wooden cross was brought into the sanctuary. Members in the worship service were asked to come drive nails into the cross, as a way of identifying with the cross and with our common guilt in the sacrifice made by Christ who gave himself for us.

Greater flexibility was brought into the Sunday School. The annual promotion of adults from one class to another was changed to a freedom to stay in a class if one found it to his liking. Or if one didn't like it where he was, he should feel free to find one he did like. This made it possible to have inter-generational classes. More classrooms were made possible by adding curtain dividers to fellowship hall in the basement. Five additional classrooms were thus added. The classroom arrangement in many instances was changed; the class members were seated in circles rather than in straight rows as the sanctuary seating arrangement had conditioned us to. Flexibility was also added in letting a class decide whether to use the Sunday School study guide or let the class select specific interests that it chose to pursue. Much emphasis was placed on training Sunday School teachers, especially encouraging teachers to avail themselves to take in workshops for teachers at Bethel College and those provided by either the District or the General Conference.

The flexibility in worship services included also involving of the laity in the services. Both young people and adults were involved. This took various forms, for there was flexibility in involvement as well. Lay persons were asked to have part in the reading of Scripture, in prayer, or in being in charge of the worship service. Responses from individuals would be given, at times to what was being presented in a message; or persons were asked to share a message with the minister, adding to what had been the focus of the pastor's

message, or responding to it. It is not a strange innovation when we consider our Anabaptist heritage, for it stemmed out of the emphasis that every member is a minister, each with his own God-given gift.

Greater use was made of contemporary music by choirs and music groups. The use of guitars and other instruments was encouraged.

There came innovations in the way of conducting the communion service. Instead of communion being served only in the sanctuary, it was served around tables in Fellowship Hall. Or communicants would be asked to come to the front in the sanctuary to receive the elements. Instead of having the bread cut into small squares, the whole loaf of bread was used and each communicant broke a piece from the loaf which was passed from one to the other. It was not a move to change the way of serving communion from one form to another, but rather the introduction of a flexibility, for it is very easy to adopt a pattern and keep following it until it becomes institutionalized. This becomes dangerous especially when it is done without examining the intent of the service when first instituted.

The church membership question was carefully studied. It was found that there were many absentee members. There were many who had not been in contact with the church for years but still retained membership. While this had been a serious concern for the congregation and pastors for years, it had never had quite the attention given to it as now. In an annual report he says, "I'm led to an area of vital concern to many of you. Membership. Perhaps the following summary seems too blunt and to the point, but I feel that things need to be stated realistically. As deacons we've wrestled long and directly with this problem, but if blame derives from the following I accept the primary responsibility." Then follow the contacts and the results—one couple sincerely requested return to the regular membership list, thus terminating their inactive status. Another requested cancellation of his listing as a member; another acknowledged correspondence but since they were moving, asked for an extension for a year of membership here. Likewise there followed recommendations for another 13 persons the urgent appeal that they accept responsible and active participation where they live; while to still

others it was stated that their formal congregational ties to our church have lapsed and that they no longer consider themselves members at Hoffnungsau. This was not a quick and easy way of solving inactive membership problems, for not only months but several years of working with the individuals involved had not brought results. There was clear acknowledgement of individuals who had responded with integrity and who were recommended for continuing membership for specific time periods or for further ministry of the congregation to the individual. Where individuals were in process of active decision making about their absenteeism from our congregation but were actively involved in other congregations, this was duly considered and action postponed pending their own conclusions. There was also the recognition of failure on the part of our membership, or where everyone seemed puzzled by failure wherever the blame might be placed.

This is certainly far from an act of pleasantry on the part of a congregation, much less those who are in positions of leadership—ministers, deacons especially; but is it not a serious attempt to give meaning to church membership, and to search diligently for a clearer acceptance of responsibility for our share in the Body of Christ, the Church of which Christ is the head?

I wrote out two membership transfers recently; one to Houston and another one to the Bethel College Church. Both were on behalf of young people who were involved in these respective congregations. As a representative of my congregation I felt proud to "commend" the woman and the man involved to the two congregations.

The above transaction involved the last two forms in the records. My curiosity was aroused. The result being a tabulation of some revealing statistics.

Records dating back to 1945 added up to 175 transfers out of our congregation. Over the 23 years span this averages out to nearly eight transfers annually.

But the destination of the 175 was also pertinent. Fifteen non-G.C. denominations were recipients. Of these, Methodists received seventeen, Old Mennonites six, Church of the Brethren five, Presbyterians four, and M.B.s three. With the exception of two who became Lutherans, most of the others gravitated toward fundamentalist groups such as Baptists, Nazarenes, E.M.Bs and E.M.Cs. At least one person joined the Friends.

However, I was pleased to note that of the 175, at least

126 simply transferred to another G.C. congregation. Thus a healthy 72% remained within General Conference ranks. And yet a trend was evident. During the period 1945-52, General Conference transfers totalled 79%, while the two succeeding eight-year periods registered a solid 69% and a skimpy 68% respectively.

During this 23-year period local membership attrition rate has been only 48; a membership drop from 395 to the present 347.

What the future holds only God knows. But we can estimate. Rural church membership declines will accelerate. If present nonresidents transferred their memberships (which would in most cases be desirable) we would experience an immediate drop to below 300 in membership. If the present student group does not "return," that will mean another eventual cut by about three dozen.

How to cope with these inevitabilities will become an increasingly more imminent threat unless dealt with wisely and objectively.[2]

As one of the members observed: "Change is often upsetting and threatening. A few members have been alienated and have left the church (although not always because of procedural changes). Those who feel religion must be meaningful and who have been less threatened welcome the opportunity to experiment. Adjustments have been painful to some but worship experiences for all have been more meaningful and personal. Some new members have come in because of our program and approach to change."

Continued high emphases in the congregation were Voluntary Service, conference support and active participation, Bethel College, Camp Mennoscah, especially in the pre-draft boot camp. Likewise participation in the affairs of the local community, doing good wherever the opportunities arose. An annual report of the Church Council gives evidence of this and we quote only parts of this 1969 Report.

The treasurers of the following Committees, Bethel College Fellowship, Relief, Cemetery, and Peace, were asked to attend the Council Meeting. The purpose was to define their duties, and explain the procedure to follow when special offerings are taken for their respective Committees. The Peace Committee was urged to encourage young men of our Congregation to enter Pax Service.

Pre-Easter Services with Rev. Peter Dyck were held March 25 through 30.

Edwin J. Schmidt and Olin Schmidt represented our Congregation at an Orientation Session at Mennoscah, for the promotion of Western District Conference Day.
Two important issues that faced the Legislature were, Liquor by the Drink and Capital Punishment. Church members were urged to write to their legislators and express concern in regard to these issues.
The Executive Committee of the Western District Conference met April 21 to plan the budget for the coming year. Dave Friesen and Milferd Penner represented our Church at this meeting.
The Pastor's plans for the summer were as follows:
Participating in an Evangelism Workshop at Elkhart, June 2-13.
Director at Camp Mennoscah for one week.
Attending the "Kansas Clergy Economic Education Workshop" at Lawrence.
Vacation with the family in the Ozarks.
To elect delegates to the Western District Conference, to be held October 10-12.
Two candidates, Virgil Regehr and Abe Dyck, were submitted as possible members of a Steering Committee of the Mid-Kansas Relief Committee.
An invitation was extended to all young people who wish to participate in the Catechism Class.
Rev. Rempel was invited by the General Conference to participate in a Pastor's Seminar at Elkhart, October 29 thru November 5.
Rev. Rempel has been asked to write the Sunday School lesson helps on "Living Your Faith" for the 1970 Fall Youth Quarterly.
The Pastor will be the Speaker this fall on the Faith and Life Radio Program on Friday mornings.
Mission Festival will be held Sunday, November 30, including a noon meal, and December 1. The speaker is Rev. Henry Poettcker.
The Deacon election was held October 19. The candidates are Elmer Gaeddert and Sam Ediger. A statement in regard to the possibility of changing the present procedure of Deacon selection will be made.
A Vietnam Moratorium is planned for October 15-19. It will be open to anyone who would like to unite with others in a "concern for peace" and a call to end the Vietnam War.
The Pastor is extremely pleased with the Retreat participation of our young people this year. We had 24 campers and 9 staff members that took part.[3]

One of the serious concerns lifted out frequently by the pastor and/or Board of Deacons was the decline in attendance

and in membership. Being a rural church in an area with few industries attracting new workers there was not much opportunity for numerical growth. With agriculture being barely able to hold its own, or declining, there was little prospect for attracting newcomers to the area. The prospect was not bright. However this was not the answer to the needs, and from the 1967 Report we quote the pastor again.

> . . . For my life is caught in the same frustrating position as was Paul's. He writes, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded. . ." (Phil. 3:12-15a).
>
> I chose this impossible purpose, so succinctly stated by Paul, as my life's ambition some fifteen years ago. You can judge me as to its evidence in my life. But, "Man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for." And thus I continue to "forget" and to "reach" and to "strain" and to "press on." Can you say the same for yourself too? I know some of you who are "ahead" of me, but what about those of you who are lagging behind? It is not really the "race" that counts, but the "finish" that determines your and my destiny.
>
> . . . Our youth love the exhilaration of this new freedom. They run ahead or away from us—blindly disregarding the safety of the "pack," blindly abandoning themselves to the luxury of non-responsibility and to the dazzling sight of "desert-gods." Aaron's golden calf pales in comparison.
>
> Such is the temper of the times! We are either with it or we aren't. Period!
>
> Our congregation inevitably is caught in the frantic pace of our century. We too are experiencing convulsive changes. The good old days beckon, but the 20th century goads us on. From the distance the "Egyptian fleshpots" seem tantalyzing, yet the taskmasters of the "Great Society" draw blood from our backs. On the one hand we perspire blood like Christ in the Garden, and on the other the liar betrays us into a position of safety and lulls us into Petrine sleep. Where will it all end—the way it's going? Hit sin harder, I am asked.
>
> . . . The year 1967 is for many of you indelibly real and will remain so. Yet 1968 beckons! Christ is striding into it—Christians must follow unless they want to stay to say "good-by" or bury "relatives," or because they've "purchased more land" or "taken a new bride."

So, ". . . if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by . . . holding fast the word of life." That I pray in the name of Christ.[4]

Sustained efforts were made to meet local budgets and to increase our giving on a regular and systematic basis. From the church council there was good support, the deacons especially being involved in planning and carrying out the spiritual ministry.

It was during this time that a paper-newsletter known as *Sounding Board* began its publication. Menno Schmidt was its editor for several years.

Milford Penner made the central treasurer system work for the congregation; this tied together the several treasuries in the church into one, making possible a single account at the bank rather than the many accounts system that had grown up with each organization doing its own banking.

"Persons in Service" list is always an indication of what is happening in a congregation. Only one such is listed here, picked quite at random.

In *In Service*

Herb Ediger Family—Ethiopia
Stan and Donna Voth—TAP—Congo
Gordon and Delores Funk—V.S.—New York
Melvin and Marilyn Flaming—V.S.—Nebraska
Ralph Ediger—V.S.—Oklahoma City
James Goertz—V.S.—Saskatchewan
Louis Martens—CPS—California
Eugene Voth—CPS—Minneapolis
Larry Shoffner—Airforce—S. Vietnam
Art Ulbricht—Army—Ft. Riley
MDS in Gulport—Steve Goering
Elmer and Elfrieda Gaeddert

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1. Annual Business Meeting Reports, Nov. 18 and 21, 1968 (Unpublished manuscript), pp. 1-2.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
3. Annual Business Meeting Reports, Nov. 17 and 18, 1969 (Unpublished manuscript), pp. 9-10.
4. Annual Business Meeting Reports, Nov. 14 and 16, 1967 (Unpublished manuscript), pp. 1-2.
5. Annual Business Meeting Reports, Nov. 17 and 18, 1969 (Unpublished manuscript), p. 3.

Chapter XII

THE FRANK KELLERS COME TO HOFFNUNGSAU

Theirs is a unque background and is the kind of which we like to hear. It is not unlike conversion-commitment experience that grows and grows. We have asked Dr. Alvin Beachy, who was pastor at the church where the Kellers were members when the time of their re-evaluation of vocational experience came to fruition, to relate that interesting record.

Frank Keller
Pastor 1973-

"How 'Butch' Became 'Reverend' "

For nineteen years Frank Rittenhouse Keller was known to everyone in the prosperous community of Souderton-Telford, Pennsylvania, as "Butch." This nickname did not derive so much from the style of his haircut, as from the business he operated. Frank was a very successful small

town butcher. His small shop was located in the rear of Daub's Grocery Store. The friendly manner of "Butch," and the other members of the family, as well as the employees who were also taught how to be friendly, caused the business to grow and prosper out of all proportion to the small space which it occupied in Daub's Store. This, coupled with the superior quality of the meat that was processed in the butchershop at Frank's home and sold from the store, had pushed the business into the four figure column by the time we learned to know Frank in the early sixties.

But despite the prosperity which others might have seen at the height of success, "Butch" was a restless person. A stint in the Navy during World War II had turned him into a firmly convinced pacifist. He read wisely and had many personal contacts with prominent persons who shared his convictions and helped them to grow. These persons included men like Lyle Tatum of the American Friends Service Committee, and John Oliver Nelson, formerly at Yale Divinity School, now at Kirkridge Retreat Center, Bangor, Pennsylvania.

"Butch" and Holly were team teachers of an eighth grade Sunday School class at Zion Mennonite Church in Souderton, Pennsylvania, for many years. The extent of their devotion to their task is reflected in the fact that they purchased the full twelve volume set of *The Interpreter's Bible* while they were still lay people. When they encountered a lesson in the quarterly that did not meet the needs of the students in their judgment, Frank and Holly would write a lesson of their own, often working till the early hours of Sunday morning after a long day at the butcher shop.

Because of his devotion and ability, Frank was elected to the church council, first as a trustee, and then, after serving for three years in that capacity, he was elected as one of our five deacons. As a pastor I valued his friendship and advice highly. Despite this recognition of his devotion and ability on the part of his peers, however, Frank remained a restless person. One evening as we were taking Peter Ediger to Philadelphia to meet a train in Frank's car, he revealed to me the source of that restlessness. The business was doing so well that he saw looming before him the possibility of retirement at age 50 if not before. Frank was not sure he wanted to become a comfortable, self-satisfied retired businessman for the rest of his life. He confided to me that he was thinking of selling the business and begin his preparation for the ministry. As I look back upon that evening I'm afraid I was not very encouraging to Frank. It is hard to know exactly why I was not encouraging. For one thing I loved Frank and valued his

presence on the church board. Also I knew that Frank had not had a college education, and having started my own higher education at age twenty-four, I knew how long and hard the struggle could be. I like to believe that my failure to give Frank much encouragement at this point was due, not alone to my own selfishness, but also to my desire to protect him from the severity of the struggle that I saw would lie ahead for him.

Fortunately for Frank, and the General Conference Mennonite Church, Robert Hunsicker joined our staff as Director of Christian Education early in 1965. Robert was a member of the United Church of Christ and a graduate of Ursinus College at Lancaster Theological Seminary. He early recognized Frank's unusual insight and ability, and encouraged him in his secret desires where I had failed to do so. Robert was also aware that Lancaster Theological Seminary had a policy of admitting a limited number of mature men who had not had college training with every entering class. Upon completion of their work, these persons were given certificates of graduation, rather than diplomas and the B.D. degree. Robert Hunsicker believed that Frank R. Keller would fit into that non-degree program very nicely. But how could either he or Frank be sure? It was no light matter to sell a successful business at age thirty-nine and start a new venture when you had a family to support.

As it turned out, nearby Ursinus College in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, provided the laboratory situation. Frank enrolled in a history course entitled "The History of Western Civilization" taught at Ursinus College during the summer months. The professor assured him that if he were to get through this course with a passing grade, he would also be able to handle anything he might encounter at the Theological Seminary. Frank passed the course with a grade of D, and on the strength of that slender promise, sold his business and moved with his family to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to begin his studies at Lancaster Theological Seminary.

The history of his ministry since then, first at his home congregation, in Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pennsylvania, and then at Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church near Inman, Kansas, is sufficient evidence that God was guiding this venture of faith. Frank would be the first to say that he could not have accomplished what he did without the support and help of his loyal and faithful wife, Holly. Together they remind us all that in this life "we walk by faith and not by sight."

Alvin J. Beachy
North Newton, Kansas 67114
April 11, 1974

The time of their work at Hoffnungsau has been short, but it has been packed full of meaningful activity. There is the usual activity with the worship experiences, educational activities that take on new forms too—classes that are scheduled during the mornings, and are open to people in the community; committees are enthusiastically working on various centennial projects—such as growing Red Turkey Wheat and getting it ready for an old-fashioned threshing bee, the production of a drama written and produced locally, picture gallery arrangements, collection of artifacts, of making and wearing of clothing similar to that worn by our forefathers, etc., etc.

All of this is closely tied and assimilated with the reasons that caused our forefathers to leave Russia and come to America, and it is given the spiritual perspective that one feels gets close to the Spirit of Christ which not only motivated people a hundred years ago, but which is the continuing motivating force in life. It is one thing to build up to a "high" for a celebration, whether that be for a one-occasion type of meeting, or for a prolonged celebration like a centennial year. Yet if such a buildup is not properly undergirded with the Spirit and love of Christ, then it is bound to fall on its face when the celebration time is over. We will all need to put our own preparation seriously to the test in this centennial year, for the years ahead will be the real test of what has happened.

Some excerpts from an Annual Report which he wrote following his first full year of work in the church at Hoffnungsau will give us some understanding of what is on the heart and mind of Pastor Keller and his wife Holly.

II Corinthians 5:16-21

Brother Adrian is a Franciscan philosopher-artist-musician who puts "sermons in a nutshell." In a serigraph picture, Brother Adrian pictures people happily walking into a bright yellow light. Across the painting are the words: "Happy is the man who can look back with pride and stride forward with hope."

The end of the church year and the beginning of a new year is an appropriate time for all of us to evaluate the past and to project plans for the future. If we are honest with ourselves, it is not always pride that we feel toward the past. Sometimes our own self-interests and pleasures

have been served while Christ's call fell upon deaf ears. Some of our efforts have been half-hearted. We are aware of errors, blunders, heartaches and tragedies and we cannot take pride in such things. We need to make our confession to God and our friends.

There is always cause for optimism. Economically and materially almost all have been blessed abundantly. Many members have given of themselves physically and materially as co-workers with Christ and fellow Christians. This annual report reflects the efforts of many willing workers.

It is not difficult for us to understand why God might be displeased with us. Yet Paul assures us that God holds no grudge against us. The whole purpose of Christ's coming was to show God's love for us, to make us one with Him and to reconcile us to one another.

Paul makes four points very clear to us. When we are "in Christ," we become a new creation. It's like a dream to think that we can become new creatures. We so easily accept as truth the saying, "a leopard cannot change his spots," or "there's nothing new under the sun." God has rewritten these truths. We become new persons in Christ —"The old has passed away, behold, the new has come." Now we can make it, new relationships, new values and new ways.

The broken relationship is restored. We are reconciled to God because Christ died in our stead. The result is that as a follower of Jesus one is a child of God and he returns to harmony and unity with his Maker.

One profound result is that the Christian lives in harmony with his fellowmen. Here we often have some problems. Many are constantly checking out one another's theology and conduct, not always loving those who are different and have experienced God differently. However, the world looks upon us and will know us because we show love (I John 4).

God is counting on us and we are His ambassadors. The Greek word means that we are direct representatives of God. Many of the people in the "Jesus movement" say, "I'd like to share with you how Jesus changed my life." We have this message of reconciliation and we are more than messengers, we are representatives and ambassadors of our Lord, and he is counting on us. In one sense the future is in our hands. We dare not let Him down!

It's great to be a part of a movement which has such a rich history and an undiminished hope for the future. The year we are about to begin has much in store for us. It is being observed as a "Centennial Year." We have a local committee hard at work and they will be sharing their hopes and dreams with us. Western District Conference

has set March 10, 1974 as Centennial Sunday. We will be having a local celebration in August 1974. A Mennonite Festival will be held at Century II in Wichita on October 11, 12 and 13, 1974. Included in this festival will be the premier performance of a play written by Urie Bender; a musical program by Hesston, Bethel and Tabor colleges; an All-Mennonite Union Worship Service and the 500-Voice Mennonite Male Chorus will sing. Not to be forgotten is the General Conference which will be held at St. Catharines, Canada, from August 1-7, 1974.

It will be a year in which we pay tribute and show appreciation for the pioneer faith of our ancestors. Let us approach the new year with a joyous spirit, seeking the divine guidance of Almighty God.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Keller

APPENDIX

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

It is clear that in Christ is our salvation, our life, and our hope. On Him the congregation is founded; Him we proclaim as Savior and Lord of life. He is the norm for the congregation as also for the individual. Man-made rules and regulations are always subject to change as He gives light and understanding. He is Savior and Lord of Life!

The Hoffnungsau Church is a rural congregation both in its location and in its membership. Although a number of members come out of the small towns nearby, very few of its active members live in a city.

Hoffnungsau is a church which has not only been involved in the District Conference, the General Conference, in MCC work, in hospitals, colleges, seminary, etc., but it has given active endorsement, support, and in a number of instances given leadership in the several areas of church-related institutions.

Again, the congregation has supplied many workers for church-related projects; one fact which has not been established in this story about the congregation is the number of people who have taken part in Voluntary Service, Pax, and various other conference or MCC-related projects. This would be a good study for a research project by some student.

The church at Hoffnungsau has not gone overboard on disciplinary measures; indeed, we may need to admit weakness in this area. There have been attempts at the exercise of redemptive love, but we have not developed sustained ways and means of reconciliation which have become the norm for the congregation. Perhaps we have never really made a conscious attempt to articulate a method, or ways in which this could and should work. To be sure there are dangers that this can result in legalism, but it would not need to, and the

needed guidelines could be set up to guard against it. As time goes on we seem to find better ways of giving expression to Biblical principles; could we not with determination strive toward ways of consciously exercising 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 and Matthew 18:12-20, and put it into language that could guide us in setting up a framework of redemptive love exercised in church discipline?

There has been and continues to be a healthy "marriage" of word and deed, of a warm evangelical approach coupled with a genuine concern for the whole man. The attempt to separate the two has never found endorsement by the main body. A good, healthy tension to keep both emphases and to maintain a healthy balance is what has been sought, and one is grateful for it.

Leadership may not always have been the strongest, yet we have been saved from the strong reactionary type that has taken us far off on one kind of tangent or the other. While it may at times have played the middle of the road, it has by the same token provided freedom for the individual member's development.

One cannot but note the ability of the congregation to make adjustments to rather severe and far-reaching changes, without being too badly shaken; as is noted by (a) the transition from German to English, or (b) the changeover from the system of electing ministers and elders out of the congregation to calling a pastor from without. What seems to come through is that there is an openness of mind, one that permits a fair chance for the positive contribution to be made.

The membership fluctuates but not greatly. This seems not to be too great a factor for the congregation. The important thing is that the congregation always seems to have had strong reason for being. It has always sensed that her contribution is a unique contribution and that is to help each one to find his/her own God-given talent and to develop that to the full.

WHAT OF HER FUTURE?

The foundation and the fabric are there for a continuing productive ministry; a ministry not primarily made by the pastors and ministers, but the ministry of each one in the congregation. This is the growing awareness that one notices

in the congregation. And with this awareness—one has the strong feeling that the Hoffnungsau Church has its place now, and will continue to feel needed. Needed to help individuals find who they are, and why they are where they are. When this is experienced, as more and more it seems to be—what greater ministry is there in a community?

MINISTERS AND DEACONS OF HOFFNUNGSAU

Dietrich Gaeddert says in Volume I of the Church Records, page 400, that there were five ministers in the Hoffnungsau congregation. This was before he was elected elder. The ministers were Peter Balzer, Peter Ratzlaff, Gerhard Kliewer, Johann Ratzlaff (who was elected in December, 1875, as was also Johann Warkentin. The latter died a few days prior to the ordination and was buried the day of the ordination in January, 1876). The fifth minister was Dietrich Gaeddert.

Dietrich Gaeddert was elected elder and ordained May 14, 1876. The day Johann Ratzlaff and Johann Warkentin were elected ministers, David H. Unruh was elected as deacon; he was ordained together with Johann Ratzlaff in January, 1876.

In 1880 there followed another election of ministers, and four were elected: Abraham Ratzlaff, David H. Unruh, Peter Flaming, and Peter Heidebrecht. And since David H. Unruh was elected minister, there were two elected as deacons: Johann Dueck and Heinrich Schulz. These four ministers and two deacons were ordained May 18, 1880. Thus, there were now nine ministers and two deacons—

Ministers	*Deacons*
Dietrich Gaeddert, elder	Johann Dueck
Peter Balzer	Heinrich Schulz
Peter Ratzlaff	
Gerhard Kliewer	
Johann Ratzlaff	
David H. Unruh	
Abraham Ratzlaff	
Peter Flaming	
Peter Heidebrecht	

All of these were elected for life.

Other ministers who followed: Peter Goertz who had come from Russia in 1874 to Dakota where he became a minister.

He moved to Kansas and became a minister in Hoffnungsau where he served for 30 years.

D. D. Unruh was ordained May 20, 1905, by Elder Abraham Ratzlaff.

A. J. Dyck and P. K. Regier were elected in 1914 and ordained the same year.

Abraham Albrecht was ordained as minister June 16, 1918.

John H. Epp

C. H. Voth, ordained in 1922

Albert Gaeddert, ordained in 1937.

Of the above the following have served as elders: (Elected from within the congregation)

Dietrich Gaeddert	1876-1900
Abraham Ratzlaff	1902-1925
A. J. Dyck	1925-1946
Albert Gaeddert	1946-1959

The following were called as pastors:

Lamont Woelk	1961-1965
Dietrich Rempel	1967-1972
Frank R. Keller	1973-

The following have served as interim pastors:

Harold Duerksen	1955
P. K. Regier	1959-1960
Dietrich Rempel	1964
Alvin Van der Smissen	1966

Assistants to the pastor:

Ferd Edigers—Summers of 1952 and 1953

Harold Duerksens—Summer of 1954

Deacons:

David H. Unruh—1876-until elected minister in 1880

Johann C. Dyck—1880-1919 (died in 1919; writer assumes he and Schulz served till death).

Heinrich Schulz—1880-1923 (died in 1923)

Peter J. Wiens—1915-died in 1929

A. B. Reimer—1918-1942

John Buller—1922-1934 (transferred membership to Buhler Menn.)

S. P. Ediger—1935-1961

John J. Dyck—1943-1962

In 1961 the system was changed and deacons were elected not for life, but for a term of four years.

1928

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Peter Flaming
Abraham Ratzlaff
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
John Buller

Trustees: S. P. Ediger
J. B. Martens
Franz Gaeddert
P. H. Ediger
P. W. Heidebrecht

S.S. Supt.—D. G. Unruh
Asst.—J. U. Regier
Jr.—J. P. Franz

— — — —

1929

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Peter Flaming
Abraham Ratzlaff
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
John Buller

Trustees: J. F. Schmidt
P. W. Heidebrecht
P. H. Ediger
Franz Gaeddert
J. B. Martens

S.S. Supt.—D. G. Unruh
Asst.—J. P.Franz
Jr.—Herbert Buller

— — — —

1930

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Peter Flaming
Abraham Ratzlaff
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
John Buller

Trustees: C. C. Sperling
J. F. Schmidt
H. F. Schmidt
P. H. Ediger
Franz Gaeddert

S.S. Supt.—D. G. Unruh
Asst.—J. R. Wedel
Jr.—Herbert Buller

— — — —

1931

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Peter Flaming
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
John Buller

Trustees: S. P. Ediger
C. C. Sperling
J. F. Schmidt
H. F. Schmidt
P. H. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—J. P. Franz
Asst.—H. B. Neufeld
Jr.—John D. Schmidt

— — — —

1932

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Peter Flaming
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
John Buller

Trustees: H. B. Martens
S. P. Ediger
C. C. Sperling
J. F. Schmidt
H. F. Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—J. P. Franz
Asst.—J. D. Schmidt
Jr.—D. G. Unruh

— — — —

1933

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Peter Flaming
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
John Buller

Trustees: J. C. Wiens
H. B. Martens
S. P. Ediger
C. C. Sperling
J. F. Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—J. D. Schmidt
Asst.—J. P. Franz
Jr.—Alvin Reimer

— — — —

1934

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Peter Flaming
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
John Buller

Trustees: H. J. Ediger
J. C. Wiens
H. B. Martens
S. P. Ediger
C. C. Sperling

S.S. Supt.—J. D. Schmidt
Asst.—J. P. Franz
Jr.—D. G. Unruh

— — — —

1935

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Peter Flaming
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: J. E. Ediger
H. J. Ediger
J. C. Wiens
H. B. Martens
A. R. Nikkel

S.S. Supt.—J. P. Franz
Asst.—J. R. Wedel
Jr.—Arnold Kim

— — — —

1936

Elder—A. J. Dyck
D. D. Unruh
C. H. Voth
Peter Flaming (only one sermon listed)

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: A. R. Nikkel
J. E. Ediger
H. J. Ediger
J. C. Wiens
H. B. Martens

S.S. Supt.—J. P. Franz
Asst.—J. D. Schmidt
Jr.—Arnold Kim

— — — —

1937

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Albert M. Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: J. P. Franz
A. R. Nikkel
J. E. Ediger
H. J. Ediger
J. C. Wiens

S.S. Supt.—Eldo Schmidt
Asst.—P. R. Gaeddert
Jr.—J. D. Schmidt

— — — —

1938

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Albert M. Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: J. F. Schmidt
J. P. Franz
A. R. Nikkel
J. E. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Eldo Schmidt
Asst.—P. R. Gaeddert
Jr.—Elmer Voth

— — — —

1939

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Albert M. Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: J. B. Martens
J. F. Schmidt
J. P. Franz
A. R. Nikkel
J. E. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Eldo Schmidt
Asst.—J. P. Franz
Jr.—Elmer Voth
Asst.—Arnold Kim

— — — —

1940

Elder—A. J. Dyck
Albert M. Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: A. R. Schmidt
J. B. Martens
J. F. Schmidt
J. P. Franz
A. R. Nikkel

S.S. Supt.—J. P. Franz
Asst.—P. R. Gaeddert
Jr.—Arnold Kim
Asst.—Elmer Voth

— — — —

1941

Pastors: A. J. Dyck
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: J. J. Dyck
A. R. Schmidt
J. B. Martens
J. F. Schmidt
J. P. Franz

S.S. Supt—Eldo Schmidt
Asst.—P. R. Gaeddert
Jr.—Arnold Kim
Asst.—Waldo Enns

— — — —

1942

Pastors: A. J. Dyck
C. H. Voth

Deacons: A. B. Reimer
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Theodore Warkentin
J. J. Dyck
G. D. Dirks
J. B. Martens
J. F. Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Eldo Schmidt
Asst. Waldo Enns
Jr. Arnold Kim
Asst.—Elmer Voth

— — — —

1943

Pastors: A. J. Dyck
C. H. Voth

Deacons: John J. Dyck,
April 1943
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: J. P. Franz
Theodore Warkentin
John J. Dyck
George D. Dirks
John B. Martens

S.S. Supt.—Edwin R. Schmidt
Asst.—Eldo Schmidt
Jr.—Ernest Heidebrecht
Asst.—Irvin R. Schmidt

— — — —

1944

Pastors: A. J. Dyck
C. H. Voth

Deacons: John J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Arnold Kim
J. P. Franz
D. G. Unruh
J. U. Regier
G. D. Dirks

S.S. Supt.—Edwin R. Schmidt
Asst.—Eldo Schmidt
Jr.—Ernest Heidebrecht
Asst.—Albert Ediger

— — — —

1945

Pastors: A. J. Dyck
C. H. Voth

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Frank L. Penner
Arnold Kim
John P. Franz
David G. Unruh
John U. Regier

S.S. Supt.—Edwin R. Schmidt
Jr.—Olin J. Schmidt
Asst. Jr.—Ernest Heidebrecht

— — — —

1946

Pastors: A. J. Dyck
C. H. Voth
Albert Gaeddert,
Oct. 1, 1946
Elder, Nov. 24, 1946

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: J. U. Regier
Frank L. Penner
Arnold Kim
John P. Franz
David G. Unruh

S.S. Supt.—Olin J. Schmidt
Jr.—Albert Ediger

— — — —

1947

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Trustees: H. B. Neufeld
Otto Schmidt
Frank L. Penner
Irvin Schmidt
John P. Schmidt

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Olin J. Schmidt
Jr.—Melvin Gaeddert

— — — —

1948

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Trustees: Ernest Heidebrecht
H. B. Neufeld
Otto Schmidt

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Frank L. Penner
Irvin Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Albert Ediger
Jr.—Melvin Gaeddert

— — — —

1949

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Trustees: Irvin R. Schmidt
Ernest Heidebrecht
H. B. Neufeld

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Otto P. Schmidt
Frank L. Penner

S.S. Supt.—Edwin J. Schmidt
Asst.—Albert Ediger
Jr. Melvin Gaeddert

— — — —

1950

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Trustees: Edward Pauls
Irvin R. Schmidt
Ernest Heidebrecht
H. B. Neufeld
Otto P. Schmidt

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Edwin J. Schmidt
Asst.—Otto P. Schmidt
Jr.—Waldo Enns

— — — —

1951

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Trustees: John P. Franz
Edward Pauls
Irvin R. Schmidt
Ernest Heidebrecht
H. B. Neufeld

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Edwin J. Schmidt
Asst.—Henry M. Ediger
Jr.—Waldo Enns

— — — —

1952

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Eldo Schmidt
John P. Franz
Edward Pauls
Irvin R. Schmidt
Ernest Heidebrecht

S.S. Supt.—Otto P. Schmidt
Asst.—Melvin Gaeddert
Jr.—Albert Ediger

— — — —

1953

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Waldo Enns
Eldo Schmidt
John P. Franz
Edward Pauls
Irvin R. Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Otto P. Schmidt
Asst.—Melvin Gaeddert
Jr.—Milferd Penner

— — — —

1954

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Pete Froese
Waldo Enns
Eldo Schmidt
John P. Franz
Edward Pauls

S.S. Supt.—Edwin J. Schmidt
Asst.—Arnold Goertz
Jr.—Ray Ediger
Asst.—Albert Ediger

— — — —

1955

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
Harold Duerksen
(Interim)
C. H. Voth

Trustees: Leonard Siemens
Pete Froese
Waldo Enns
Eldo Schmidt
John P. Franz

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Edwin J. Schmidt
Asst.—Irvin R. Schmidt
Jr.—Ray Ediger
Asst.—Mrs. Waldo Enns

— — — —

1956

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Wilbur Schmidt
Leonard Siemens
Pete Froese
Waldo Enns
Eldo Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Melvin Goeddert
Asst.—Irvin R. Schmidt
Jr.—Mrs. Arnold Schmidt
Asst. Harold Froese

— — — —

1957

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Frank Dick
Wilbur Schmidt
Leonard Siemens
Pete Froese
Waldo Enns

S.S. Supt.—Harold Goertz
Asst.—Irvin R. Schmidt
Jr.—Mrs. Arnold Schmidt
Asst.—Mrs. Waldo Enns

— — — —

1958

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

Trustees: Olin Schmidt
Frank Dick
Wilbur Schmidt
Leonard Siemens
Pete Froese

S.S. Supt.—Harold Goertz
Asst.—Irvin R. Schmidt
Jr.—Mrs. Waldo Enns
Asst.—Mrs. Edwin R. Schmidt

1959

Pastors: Albert Gaeddert
C. H. Voth
P. K. Regier
(Interim)

Trustees: Harold Froese
Olin Schmidt
Frank Dick
Wilbur Schmidt
Leonard Siemens

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Elmer Gaeddert
Asst.—Frank Ediger
Jr.—Mrs. Waldo Enns
Asst.—Mrs. Wilbur Schmidt

— — — —

1960

Pastors: P. K. Regier (interim)
Lamont A. Woelk, July 10, 1960
C. H. Voth

Trustees: Nick Martens
Harold Froese
Olin Schmidt
Frank Dick
Wilbur Schmidt

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
S. P. Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Elmer Gaeddert
Asst.—Frank Ediger
Jr.—Mrs. Wilbur Schmidt
Asst.—Mrs. Milton Wiens

— — — —

1961

Pastor: Lamont A. Woelk
Chairman of Council: Willis Harder

Trustees: Frank Dick
Olin Schmidt
Harold Froese
Nick Martens
Ray Ediger

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
Otto Schmidt
Elmer Gaeddert
H. H. Janzen

S.S. Supt.—Frank Ediger
Asst.—Dave Friesen
Jr.—Harold Goertz
Jr.—Mrs. Wilbur Schmidt

— — — —

1962

Pastor: Lamont A. Woelk
Chairman of Council:
Willis Harder

Trustees: Olin Schmidt
Harold Froese
Nick Martens
Ray Ediger
Arnold Schmidt

Deacons: J. J. Dyck
Elmer Gaeddert
H. H. Janzen
Otto Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Dave Friesen
Asst.—Wilbur Schmidt
Jr.—Harold Goertz
Asst.—Mrs. Abe Dyck

1963

Pastor: Lamont Woelk
Chairman of Council
Willis Harder

Trustees: Harold Froese
Nick Martens
Ray Ediger
Arnold Schmidt
Homer Nikkel

Deacons: Elmer Gaeddert
H. H. Janzen
Otto Schmidt
Irvin R. Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Dave Friesen
Asst.—Wilbur Schmidt
Jr.—Mrs. Abe Dyck
Asst.—Mrs. Eldo Ediger

— — — —

1964

Pastors: Lamont Woelk
Dietrich Rempel
(Interim)
Chairman of Council:
Edwin J. Schmidt

Trustees: Nick Martens
Ray Ediger
Arnold Schmidt
Waldo Enns
Clarence Froese

Deacons: Elmer Voth
Otto Schmidt
Irvin R. Schmidt
Elmer Gaeddert

S.S. Supt.—Wilbur Schmidt
Asst.—Paul Thiessen
Jr.—Mrs. Abe Dyck
Asst.—Mrs. Eldo Ediger

— — — —

1965

Pastor: Lamont Woelk
Chairman of Council:
Edwin J. Schmidt

Trustees: Ray Ediger
Arnold Schmidt
Waldo Enns
Clarence Froese
Frank Ediger

Deacons: Otto Schmidt
Irvin R. Schmidt
Elmer Gaeddert
Elmer Voth

S.S. Supt.—Wilbur Schmidt
Asst.—Paul Thiessen
Jr.—Mrs. Eldo Ediger
Asst.—Mrs. Elmer Wiens

— — — —

1966

Pastor: Alvin Van der Smissen (Interim)
Chairman of Council:
Edwin J. Schmidt

Trustees: Arnold Schmidt
Waldo Enns
Clarence Froese
Frank Ediger
Albert Ediger

Deacons: Irvin R. Schmidt
Elmer Gaeddert
Elmer Voth
Otto Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Paul Thiessen
Asst.—Ernest Heidebrecht
Jr.—Mrs. Eldo Ediger
Asst.—Mrs. Elmer Wiens

— — — —

1967

Pastor: Dietrich Rempel
Chairman of Council:
Dave Friesen

Trustees: Waldo Enns
Clarence Froese
Frank Ediger
Albert Ediger
Harold Pauls

Deacons: Elmer Gaeddert
Elmer Voth
Otto Schmidt
Irvin R. Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Paul Thiessen
Asst.—Ernest Heidebrecht
Jr.—Mrs. Elmer Wiens
Asst.—Mrs. Nick Martens

— — — —

1968

Pastor: Dietrich Rempel
Chairman of Council:
Dave Friesen

Trustees: Clarence Froese
Frank Ediger
lbert Ediger
Harold Pauls
Delbert Ediger

Deacons: Elmer Voth
Otto Schmidt
Irvin R. Schmidt
Harold Goertz

S.S. Supt.—Ernest Heidebrecht
Asst.—Milferd Penner
Jr.—Mrs. Elmer Wiens
Asst.—Mrs. Nick Martens

1969

Pastor: Dietrich Rempel
Chairman of Council:
Dave Friesen

Deacons: Otto Schmidt
Irvin R. Schmidt
Harold Goertz
Elmer Voth

Trustees: Frank Ediger
Albert Ediger
Harold Pauls
Delbert Ediger
Richard Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Ernest Heidebrecht
Asst.—Milferd Penner
Jr.—Mrs. Nick Martens
Asst.—Mrs. Harold Pauls

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1970

Pastor: Dietrich Rempel
Chairman of Council:
Dave Friesen

Deacons: Irvin R. Schmidt
Harold Goertz
Elmer Voth
Elmer Gaeddert

Trustees: Albert Ediger
Harold Pauls
Delbert Ediger
Richard Ediger
Dan Thiessen

S.S. Supt.—Milferd Penner
Asst.—Lowell Goering
Jr.—Mrs. Nick Martens
Asst.—Mrs. Harold Pauls

— — — —

1971

Pastor: Dietrich Rempel
Chairman of Council:
Dave Friesen

Deacons: Harold Goertz
Elmer Voth
Elmer Gaeddert
Virgil Regehr

Trustees: Harold Pauls
Delbert Ediger
Richard Ediger
Dan Thiessen
Edwin R. Schmidt

S.S. Supt.—Milferd Penner
Asst.—Lowell Goering
Jr.—Mrs. Harold Pauls
Asst.—Mrs. Milton Wiens

— — — —

1972

Pastor: Dietrich Rempel
Frank R. Keller,
Oct. 15, 1972
Chairman of Council:
Dave Friesen

Trustees: Delbert Ediger
Richard Ediger
Dan Thiessen
Edwin R. Schmidt
Wilbur Martens

Deacons: Elmer Voth
Elmer Gaeddert
Virgil Regehr
Harold Goertz

S.S. Supt.—Lowell Goering
Asst.—Bill Ediger
Jr.—Mrs. Harold Pauls
Asst.—Mrs. Milton Wiens

— — — —

1973

Pastor: Frank R. Keller
Chairman of Council:
Willis Harder

Deacons: Elmer Gaeddert
Virgil Regehr
Harold Goertz
Herbert Voth

Trustees: Richard Ediger
Dan Thiessen
Edwin R. Schmidt
Wilbur Martens
Robert Goering

S.S. Supt.—Lowell Goering
Asst.—Bill Ediger
Jr.—Mrs. Milton Wiens
Asst.—Mrs. Marvin Siemens

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1974

Pastor: Frank R. Keller
Chairman of Council:
Willis Hardder
Deacons: Virgil Regehr
Harold Goertz
Herbert Voth
Elmer Gaeddert

Trustees: Dan Thiessen
Edwin R. Schmidt
Wilbur Martens
Robert Goering
Eldo Ediger

S.S. Supt.—Bill Ediger
Asst.—Arlo Schmidt
Jr.—Mrs. Milton Wiens
Asst.—Mrs. Marvin Siemens

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